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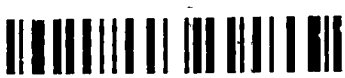

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OF

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THE RISE AND DECLINE

OF

THE NETHERLANDS

A POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC HISTORY

AND A STUDY IN PRACTICAL STATESMANSHIP

36131 ac

BY

J. ELLIS BARKER

'History is Philosophy teaching by example.'

DIONYSIUS OF HALICARNASSUS: *De Arte Rhetorica*, xi. 2

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MACHIAVELLI: *La Prima Deca di Tito Livio*, i. 39

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ALL THOSE CITIZENS OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

WHO HAVE THE

GREATNESS, HAPPINESS, AND PROSPERITY

OF THEIR EMPIRE AND OF THEIR COUNTRY

TRULY AT HEART

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THE RISE AND DECLINE

OF

THE NETHERLANDS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION—THE NETHERLANDS AND THE BRITISH EMPIRE, A COMPARISON AND A PARALLEL

'The thing that hath been, is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.'—*Eccles.* i. 9.

'The laws of history are as immutable as are the laws of nature. They apply to all times and to all countries, for similar causes always produce similar effects.'—SCHILLER, *Abfall der Niederlande, Einleitung.*

EXPERIENCE is the mother of wisdom, and remembrance is the mother of experience. Therefore, the wise king Solomon, when contemplating the utter vanity of all earthly things, cried out, in the sadness of his heart, 'There is no remembrance of former things, neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after.' These are the concluding words of the introduction to Solomon's book of worldly wisdom which is commonly known under the name Ecclesiastes, and the prominent position given to them seems to indicate that Solomon saw the greatest, and apparently an insurmountable, bar to practical human progress, and therefore to human happiness, in the impossibility of transmitting human experience to future ages.

In King Solomon's time, a thousand years before Christ, writing was hardly known, history was unknown. Knowledge

and experience could be transmitted to posterity practically only by oral tradition. In those days there was really 'no remembrance of former things.'

While former ages suffered from the dearth of records of the past, the present generation suffers almost equally from the abundance and the bulkiness of books of history, and the vast majority of the larger existing histories, unfortunately, appeal rather to students of history than to the general public. But while the number of histories which, for most practical purposes, are of little value is very great, some most important and most instructive historical events have hitherto escaped description. Of these omitted historical events none seems more interesting and important to all Anglo-Saxon nations than the rise and decline of the Netherlands. In fact, it may be asserted that the story of the rise and decline of the Netherlands is of greater practical importance to all English-speaking nations than is the history of Anglo-Saxondom itself. For all practical purposes it matters little whether an Englishman is acquainted with the existence of Henry VIII. and George IV., but it is most important that every British voter should be acquainted with the causes which led to the decline and the downfall of the Dutch Commonwealth.

The history of Anglo-Saxondom and of England shows how, from a small human seed, which obscure adventurers from the North dropped on the East coast of Great Britain among savages—a people, a nation, a State, a kingdom, an empire, a number of empires, a new kind of men, a new spirit among men, a new civilisation, and a new civilisation-compelling force, arose which has re-formed and re-cast the world. The contemplation of the historical rise and growth, and of the glorious career, of the Anglo-Saxon family of nations affords ground no doubt for much satisfaction and for justifiable pride to us, and we may learn much from the wisdom and from the errors of our forefathers, from the successes and from the disasters which are recorded in the annals of our history. However, the contemplation of our great and glorious, though chequered, past will help us but little to understand and to forecast the future, and to treat the problems of the present with that knowledge, wisdom, and understanding which the study of history ought to supply.

The utility and value of history lie in its practical teaching, and the great Guicciardini wisely observed, in opening his celebrated history, 'From the knowledge of so many, so various, and so important incidents everyone may draw instruction of some sort or other conducive both to his own and to the public good.'[1] So far the history of Anglo-Saxondom has, on the whole, been a record of steady progress and of triumphant expansion. However, nothing is permanent in this world. Nations rise, increase, expand, grow old, and at last decay. Anglo-Saxon civilisation and Anglo-Saxon rule may disappear in the vortex of time, which has swallowed up the leading nations, races, civilisation, and languages of the past. Therefore we should endeavour to understand, guided by history, the dangers and difficulties which surround us and which we may meet in the future, and perhaps in the near future. These dangers and difficulties we can most easily understand by studying the history of the Netherlands.

The history of the Netherlands gives us the only existing example of the rise and decline of a modern democracy, and therefore it should be of the very greatest interest to all Anglo-Saxon nations. It should be of interest especially to Great Britain, because Great Britain nearly resembles the Netherlands in geographical position, physical structure and climate, elements which have ever exercised a most potent influence upon the historical development of nations. This physical resemblance of the Netherlands and of Great Britain has probably been responsible for the fact that the development of the two countries has taken place on parallel, one might almost say on identical, lines.

In former ages the Dutch were our masters and our teachers in political and economic matters. They were the great pioneers of civilisation. By following their example, Great Britain has become powerful and prosperous, and has grown from a cramped European state into a world-empire. During two centuries England has led the world towards light and liberty, and has opened the great industrial era in the world's history, but she was not the originator of that enlightened and humane policy. Our ideas of civil liberty, of religious toleration

[1] *Istoria d' Italia*, 1561, 1.

and of peaceful and natural development, and most of our sciences and industries, were borrowed from the Netherlands. English civilisation is Dutch civilisation to a very large extent. In the words of Mr. Thorold Rogers, the well-known economist, 'Holland taught Europe nearly everything. She instructed communities in progressive and rational agriculture. She was the pioneer in navigation and in discovery, and, according to the lights of the age, was the founder of intelligent commerce. She produced the greatest jurists of the seventeenth century. She was pre-eminent in the arts of peace. The presses of Holland put forth more books than did all the rest of Europe. She had the most learned scholars. The languages of the East were first given to the world by Dutchmen. She was foremost in physical research, in rational medicine. She instructed statesmen in finance, traders in banking and credit, philosophers in the speculative sciences. For a long time that little storm-vexed nook of North-western Europe was the university of the civilised world, the centre of European trade, the admiration, the envy, the example of nations.

The Dutch were not only the pioneers in material and scientific progress, but also the pioneers of liberty. A great American historian wrote: 'The Netherlands divide with England the glory of having planted the first colonies in the United States. They also divide the glory of having set the example of public freedom. If England gave our fathers the idea of a popular representation, the United Provinces were their model of a federal union.'[2] The great revolutions in England, France, and the United States may be traced back to the example which the Dutch set to the world in destroying the tyrannical giant power of Spain. Besides, the Dutch enjoy the high honour of having twice saved the Western world from subjection—first from Spain, and then from France.[3] In preventing Napoleon I. from enslaving the Continent, Great Britain followed the example set by the Netherlands three centuries ago. The Dutch have, no doubt, been one of the greatest factors for good in the history of the world, and it is

[1] Rogers, *Holland*, 1885, Introduction.
[2] Bancroft, *History of United States*, chap. xxii.
[3] Kitchin, *History of France*, vol. iii. p. 77.

worth while to follow the history of that nation which has had such a glorious record and which has furnished the leaven that has reformed and humanised the world.

More than two centuries ago the Netherlands occupied a great and glorious position, a position which was almost identical with that occupied at present by Great Britain; for the Dutch then possessed a world-empire which, like the present British Empire, was based on trade and industry. The same vitally important problems which now confront Great Britain had then to be solved by the Dutch statesmen, but they were wrongly solved by them, and the consequence has been the decline and decay of the Netherlands.

By following in former centuries the footsteps of the Dutch, Great Britain has become a mighty and prosperous empire and a leader among nations. By profiting from the experience of the Dutch, Great Britain may learn, and ought to learn now, how to avoid the fate which has overtaken the Netherlands. The history of the rise and decline of the Netherlands enables us best to understand the problem of the British Empire. It supplies the most powerful object lessons in practical statesmanship and the strongest arguments in favour of constructive imperialism. With this idea in my mind the present history has been written.

Unfortunately no adequate history of the Netherlands exists in the English language. There are three general Histories of Holland, one written by T. C. Grattan, in one volume, published in 1830; another by C. M. Davies, in three volumes, published in 1841–44; and a short, popular book by Thorold Rogers, published in 1888. Of these three books, the first two are out of print. Therefore the hurriedly written and unsatisfactory treatise by Rogers, published in the 'Story of the Nations' series, is the only general History of the Netherlands available to the general reader. Apart from these three books, there are three monumental works by John Lothrop Motley, dealing with Dutch history—namely, 'The Rise of the Dutch Republic,' in three volumes, the 'History of the United Netherlands,' in four volumes, and 'The Life and Death of John of Barneveld,' in two volumes. These nine volumes give a splendid and most dramatic picture of the history of the Netherlands during sixty-four years, from 1555 to 1619. They give an account of sixty

years of war, of a gigantic struggle of right against might, and of the final triumph of the civil power over a military tyranny. But sixty years are only a short period in the life of a nation, and the sixty years which Motley depicts show us neither the causes of the rise nor those of the decline of the Netherlands. The economic history of the Netherlands has been very inadequately treated by the author, and the great bulk of Motley's nine volumes makes their reading impossible to all excepting the leisured few. For these reasons Motley's Histories furnish us with but few data of practical political and economic utility.

Motley's three Histories were written with a purpose which widely differs from the object with which the present book has been composed. In concluding his 'History of the United Netherlands,' Motley took farewell of the reader in the following words: 'The writer . . . . has attempted to trace the origin and the eventful course of the Dutch Commonwealth. If, by his labours, a generous love has been fostered for that blessing without which everything that this earth can offer is worthless—freedom of thought and speech and of life—his highest wish has been fulfilled.' Motley has splendidly achieved the object which he set himself in writing the early history of the Dutch. His books cannot fail to arouse the enthusiasm of every reader for all that is great and noble and worth fighting for. However, his work serves rather an ideal than a practical purpose; he gives us a drama not a history. Therefore, Motley's History teaches but little to those statesmen, politicians, and business men who are anxious to study the practical lessons of history, and to learn statesmanship and political economy in the highest sense at the hand of historical facts.

I have not attempted to emulate or to imitate Motley, and I think I ought to confess that I have deliberately deserted the broad path trodden by modern historians, being convinced that, for many years past, the historians of all countries have been advancing in a wrong direction. In their desire to be strictly accurate, and to depict political events fully and faithfully in all their bearings, modern historians have crowded their canvases with so many elaborate details that we can no longer focus and grasp the logical sequence of events, and clearly perceive their principal causes and consequences. Few people have now-

adays the courage, the perseverance, and the time to read the Histories of Gibbon, Macaulay, or Motley from beginning to end, and those who have been able to peruse a bulky History, the reading of which takes several months, have, when they have at last come to the end of their task, only a vague and confused impression of the events which they have tried to understand. In their desire for accuracy and completeness, modern historians have created encyclopædic histories, or rather historical encyclopædias, which are excellent as books of reference, but which can be read with pleasure and profit by hardly any except historians. In modern histories brevity has been sacrificed to fullness, and clearness to accuracy, by the inclusion of countless details. Herbert Spencer rightly complained that 'modern history is a mere tissue of names and dates, and dead, unmeaning events. Scarcely any of the facts set down in our school histories, and very few of those contained in the more elaborate works written for adults, illustrate the right principles of political action.'[1] Modern histories, which should tell a plain and simple tale of absorbing interest and of great practical value, have become enormous monuments of patient research. They are similar to the Egyptian pyramids, impressing us rather by the enormous labour uselessly spent on them than by their beauty or utility. Both are useful chiefly as quarries.

Believing with Lord Bacon that histories ought to be 'speaking pictures,'[2] I have found it necessary to desert the beaten track of the historian in writing this book. Although the material in my possession might have sufficed for a detailed history which in bulk would have rivalled the very largest histories published in this country, I have produced but a small volume, having resolved to leave out all details which are not of vital importance to the story which I have to tell. In the words of the celebrated Erasmus of Rotterdam, 'Truth does not want many words, and that is remembered best which is most concisely related.' Lord Bacon complained that histories 'rather showed the pomp of affairs than their true and inward springs';[3] and, as few people, specialists excepted, are interested in the

[1] Herbert Spencer, *Education*, chap. i.

[2] Letter to the Lord Chancellor, April 2, 1605.

[3] *Advancement of Learning*, ii. 7.

details of the diplomatic or military transactions which have taken place centuries ago, I have often described, in a few words, events belonging to 'the pomp and circumstance' of history which an orthodox historian would have depicted in several hundred pages. Many important battles and sieges have not even been mentioned. This book is meant to be a history with a purpose, not a huge collection of miscellaneous facts; it is meant to be a history of causes and effects, not a lengthy and wearisome account of battles, sieges, and negotiations; for I believe with Polybius that 'the most useful part of history is the knowledge of what passed before and after every great event, and especially the causes that produced it.'[1] After all, 'we cannot make history, but we can always learn from its lessons and direct the policy of a State in accordance with its historical destiny; for statesmanship is not an exact science but the ability to adapt one's action to the circumstances of the moment and to take the most useful or the least harmful measures.'[2]

I cannot claim that I am an innovator in writing this book in a manner which certainly is unconventional, and which, at first sight, may appear new. I am old-fashioned enough to consider Thucydides still by far the greatest historian the world has seen, and I have endeavoured to follow the example of that great man, whom I acknowledge my teacher. Unfortunately, modern historians are, from year to year, drifting further away from the model which was given to the world by that ever-illustrious Greek, but I think the time will come when they will learn their error, and return to Thucydides.

Before composing this book I have consulted all the best Dutch, French, German, English, Italian, Spanish and American authors who have written on Dutch affairs. For those who wish to study the history of the Netherlands the knowledge of Dutch is necessary, because many of the most important books—I would mention the monumental and indispensable works of Bor, Aitzema, Wagenaar—have not been translated from the Dutch. However as few people know Dutch, I have referred in my footnotes to English, French, and German translations whenever such were available, for my footnotes are not intended to show my

[1] Polybius, *History*, iii. 3.

[2] Bismarck, speech, July 30, 1892.

erudition, but to guide those students who wish to follow up my investigations. In translating I have weighed, but not counted, the words of the original, and in quoting old English authors I have occasionally found it necessary to put the extracts given into modern English in order to maintain the readability of the book. I have freely drawn on the vast collections of ancient State Papers, on the private correspondence of the principal actors, and on the forgotten diplomatic correspondence of the time, collections which are rarely disturbed but which alone enable the historian to obtain a clear idea of the true inwardness of affairs of State. Many of the important extracts given have never before been published in the English language.

On the whole my history is based on the best evidence of contemporaries, but I have not failed to study and to quote many of the modern writers, partly in order to show that the conclusions at which I have arrived through my studies are confirmed by many independent investigators, partly in order to lead those who wish for further information on the subject to sources that are fairly easily accessible. Therefore this book will serve as a key to the whole historical literature on the Netherlands. To facilitate further research by those who are interested in Dutch affairs, I have appended an asterisk to the important and two asterisks to the most important books quoted. Although the sources referred to in the footnotes number only about five hundred, many more books and pamphlets bearing on Dutch affairs than those named—in all, perhaps, two thousand—have been consulted.

Believing with Dionysius of Halicarnassus that history ought to be 'philosophy teaching by example,' I have not restricted myself to the bare description of those events that have brought about the rise and decline of the Netherlands, but I have endeavoured to make their meaning clear, and to point out the lessons in practical statesmanship which they teach. Therefore, I have interspersed throughout this history the views of the greatest statesmen, from the statesmen of antiquity to Lord Salisbury and Prince Bismarck, and the opinions of the greatest political writers, from Aristotle to Bagehot, believing with Lord Brougham that 'the knowledge of political science, which teaches the people their true interests, can alone rescue them from the

error of ages, and secure on a lasting foundation the peace and happiness of the world.'[1] Therefore this book will not only be a history, but also a compendium of practical statesmanship, for 'history, while it should be scientific in its method, should pursue a practical object.'[2]

More than three centuries ago a forgotten English worthy quaintly wrote: 'Among all sorts of humane writers there is none that have done more profit, or deserved greater praise, then they who have committed to faithfull records of Histories eyther the government of mighty States, or the lives and actes of famous men. For by describing the order and passages of these two, and what events had followed what counsailes, they have set foorth unto us not only precepts, but lively patterns both for private directions and for affayres of State, whereby in shorte time younge men may be instructed, and ould men more fullie furnished with experience, then the longest age of man can affoorde.'[3]

These words may well be remembered by all historians.

In conclusion I would draw attention to the Analytical Index at the end of this volume, which, through its completeness and arrangement, should greatly increase the practical utility of this book.

[1] Brougham, *Political Philosophy*, preliminary discourse.

[2] Sir J. R. Seeley, *Expansion of England*.

[3] Sir John Hayward, *History of Henry the Fourth*, 1599, introduction.

CHAPTER II

THE NATURAL CONDITIONS AND RESOURCES OF THE NETHERLANDS, AND THEIR INFLUENCE IN SHAPING THE CHARACTER AND HISTORY OF THE DUTCH

'It is the settled appointment of Nature that soft soils should breed soft men, and that the same land should never be famous for the excellence of its fruit and for the vigour of its inhabitants.'—HERODOTUS, *Calliope.*

'The barrenness of the soil makes men industrious, sober, hard-working, courageous, and warlike, for they must obtain by their own exertion that which the earth denies them, whilst the fertility of a country produces in them love of ease, indolence, and a sense of cautious self-preservation.'—MONTESQUIEU, *Esprit des Lois*, xviii. 4.

THE wisest men of antiquity, such as Plato, Aristotle, Hippocrates, and Thucydides, as well as the greatest statesmen of modern times from Machiavelli to Prince Bismarck, have pointed out that climate, soil, and surroundings have a most potent influence in determining the character of individuals and of nations, and in shaping the history of States. Therefore, we ought to take a short survey of the natural conditions of the country where Providence has laid the scene of the rise and decline of the Netherlands.

If we look at a map of the present kingdom of Holland, we find that approximately one-half of the country lies on a level with, or below the level of, the sea. Hence, one half of the country is in constant danger of being swallowed up by the ocean. This extensive low-lying part has to be defended against the sea by carefully tended dunes and gigantic sea-dykes, and as certain parts are very low indeed—there are low-lying parts called polders which lie sixteen feet below the level of the sea—the inroad of the sea means destruction to all living things.

The larger part of the kingdom of Holland was originally an enormous swamp. Hence, the ancient Batavians, being forced

to take to the water, became amphibious. Nature made the Dutch a nation of fishermen and sailors. The elder Pliny, who wrote about the year 70 after Christ, tells us of Holland that, 'the ocean pours in its flood twice every day, and produces in one's mind a feeling of uncertainty whether one should consider that country as a part of the land or of the sea. The wretched inhabitants take refuge on the sand-hills or in little huts, which they construct on the summit of lofty poles, in order to escape the tides. When the sea rises, they appear like navigators floating on the water; when it retires, they give the impression of mariners escaping from a wrecked ship. The Batavians subsist on the fish left by the receding waters, and they catch these in nets made of rushes or seaweed. Neither tree nor shrub is visible on these shores. The drink of these people is rain water, which they preserve with great care. Their fuel is a kind of turf which they gather and form with the hand.'[1] The miserable aspect of the country changed little during several of the ensuing centuries, for we learn that in the third century 'there was not in the whole of the immense plain of the Netherlands a spot of ground that did not yield under the footsteps of man.'[2]

Artificial defences against the sea have been known in the Low Countries from the earliest times. The elder Pliny, for instance, mentioned the existence of sea-dykes. At present 1,550 miles of sea-dykes, a distance more than twice as great as that which separates Land's End from John o'Groat's, defend Holland against her most dangerous, her ever-threatening, and her most implacable enemy. But for the dykes, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Delft, Haarlem, Dordrecht, Utrecht, and territory inhabited by almost 4,000,000 people, would disappear in the waves.[3] There is a Dutch proverb which says: 'God made the sea; we made the land.' There is much truth in that proverb.

Holland's defence against inundations is particularly difficult, because a strong gale blowing towards the land not only drives the sea against the walls which protect the low-lying mainland

[1] Pliny, *Historia Naturalis*, xvi. 1.
[2] Eumenius, *Panegyric on Constantine*, cap. viii.
[3] Blink, *Nederland*, 1896, p. 39.

but also dams up the mouths of the large rivers which flow through Holland. Hence the Dutch are frequently attacked by enormous floods, simultaneously in front and in the rear. The danger of the rivers overflowing their banks is increased by the fact that the large rivers of the Netherlands, among which the Rhine, the Meuse, and the Scheldt are the most noteworthy, are constantly depositing enormous masses of sand and mud in the riverbed. Consequently the bottom of the riverbeds and the water-level of the rivers themselves have been rising from year to year, and from year to year the dykes which hedge in these rivers have to be heightened. Therefore, we find in the Netherlands the curious spectacle of rivers and canals flowing high above the level of the ground, and of barges sailing apparently through mid-air.

The enormous engineering works required for the defence of the Netherlands against the water have occasioned an incalculable expenditure in labour and in money. However, not only have the Dutch succeeded in defending their country against the sea and rivers which threatened to overwhelm the land and to drown the inhabitants, but they have also succeeded in defending their territory against an almost equally dangerous enemy, the destructive pile-worm, which was introduced into Holland by the use of exotic timber. The ravages of the pile-worm have caused more than one panic in the Netherlands, and have cost the country more than would a large war.[1]

From time to time, terrible floods have broken down the defences of the Low Countries against the sea and have exterminated large portions of the population. During the thirteenth century, thirty-five great inundations swallowed up several hundred thousand inhabitants, and the formation of the Zuyder Zee alone, which took place about that time, drowned eighty thousand people. In 1421, a terrible flood destroyed in one night seventy-two villages and a hundred thousand lives. However, the Dutch, with the patience of ants, not only rebuilt their broken defences after every disaster, but they wrung, year by year, fresh territory from the sea, by enclosing shallows with sea-walls and dykes and pumping out first the sea-water, and later on the ground-water, rain-water,

[1] Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book 73, chap. xxiv.*

&c., by means of machinery driven by windmills. These 'wind and water mills,' as they are called in Holland, came in general use in the fifteenth century.[1] Some years ago more than ten thousand windmills were occupied in pumping water. The sandy soil reclaimed in this manner had to be freed from salt by frequent washing, it had to be fertilised by mixing other soils and manure with it, and then only was the reclaimed ground usable for cultivation. Thus the Dutch have, with untold labour, and at an enormous expense, converted almost a million acres of sea into fruitful fields and pastures.

In the statesmanlike book entitled 'Political Maxims of the State of Holland,' to which the name of John de Witt, the celebrated Dutch statesman, is usually appended, but which appears to have been written chiefly by P. de la Court, and which was first published anonymously in 1662, we find the following comprehensive and most interesting account of 'Holland's Natural Burdens and Hindrances.'

'Holland, lying upon the sea, has many inland rivers, and, being situated in a low and level country, is subject to many inconveniences.

'Firstly, there are sharp and very long winters, so that there is need of more light, firing, clothing and food than in warmer countries. Besides, all the cattle on our pasture-land must then be housed, and thereby we bestow more cost and pains and yet reap less profit than in summer, and also less profit than is derived from cattle in other lands, where the animals remain longer, and perhaps all the winter, in the fields.

'Secondly, the seasons in Holland are so short that they must be very punctually observed if we wish to derive any profit from our ploughed land, for the seed in this moist country quickly rots in the ground and is spoilt, and, because of the short seasons, we cannot sow again.

'Thirdly, owing to the vicinity of the sea and the flatness of the land, Holland is subject, in spring and autumn, to weather which is very unwholesome for the inhabitants. In the spring, the sharp, cold winds destroy most of the blossoms on our fruit trees, and in autumn much fruit is blown down before it has ripened by the usually prevailing gales.

[1] Blink, *Nederland*, 1896, p. 44.

'Fourthly, and principally, it is to be considered that the land, lying for the most part lower than the level of the sea and of the rivers when they are in flood, must withstand the terrible storms of the ocean, and has to be defended with great expense against shoals of ice which block up the rivers, and the making of one rod long of a sea-dyke sometimes costs no less than 600 guilders (£50).

'Fifthly, Holland possesses no minerals and no mines, so that nothing can be taken out of the earth excepting clay and turf, and even that cannot be done without spoiling and disfiguring the ground.

'As the land everywhere in Holland consists, for the most part, of sand, moor or fen, it must necessarily be enriched with other soil and manure. However, by reason of the looseness of the land, such enrichment quickly filters through and is lost, and therefore the costly process of enrichment has constantly to be renewed.'[1]

On the whole, the natural conditions of the Netherlands were most unfavourable to the establishment of industries and especially to the establishment of the most necessary industries, such as agriculture and cattle-raising. But the same conditions which proved at first inimical to the industrial development of the country proved advantageous to the Dutch later on, when their industries had left the primary stage, when the era of more refined industries, of labour-saving machinery and of international and colonial trade had opened.

The constant sharp winds which had made agriculture almost impossible were utilised for the turning of thousands of windmills, which were employed not only for pumping water, as has already been mentioned, but also for sawing timber, grinding corn, crushing seed, making paper, &c.[2] Wind became a most economical motive force. The flatness of the land and its levelness with the sea, which had been a great impediment to agriculture, and the abundance of rivers, which rendered almost impossible the making of roads, facilitated the construction of canals, which greatly assisted in the development of the industries and the commerce of the country. Even the inundations

[1] De Witt, *Political Maxims*, 1743, 17.*

[2] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 504.*

had some compensating advantages. The common danger gave to the Dutch a sense of solidarity and a sense of unity at least within restricted areas. Local co-operation, which was necessary in constructing and maintaining dams and sea-walls, &c., made possible the development of political, industrial, and commercial co-operation when the Netherlands had advanced in material culture. Lastly, the position of the Netherlands at a point of vantage where the two great trade routes from the countries of Western Europe to the countries in the Baltic and from England along the Rhine to the South of Europe intersect, proved in course of time to be of the greatest advantage to the Dutch. By the possession of numerous harbours and of a population which, from the earliest times, had had to struggle with the sea, and which abounded in skilful and fearless seamen, the Netherlands were particularly fitted for the development of a large international carrying trade.

If we bear in mind that the Netherlands were originally a swamp, that they were constantly threatened with inundations, and that in the morass of Holland no stone, no timber, no coal, was found, and that no trees, no grain, and no vegetables could be grown there unless elaborate and costly artificial preparations, unknown in other countries, were made, we cannot wonder that De la Court and many other authors stated that Holland was a country which, by its natural conditions, was not worthy of being inhabited.

About 1650, Owen Feltham, a facetious but keenly observant Englishman, travelled through the Low Countries, and published his impressions in an amusing little book which is now forgotten, but which deserves reprinting. In the opening phrases he tells his readers: 'The Netherlands are a general sea-land, the great bog of Europe. There is not such another marsh in the world; that's flat. They are an universal quagmire epitomised a green cheese in pickle. There is in them an equilibrium of mud and water.'[1] To the casual observer it was indeed an enigma how any human being could live in so wretched and so rough a country.

The hard and laborious life which the original inhabitants of the Netherlands were compelled to lead made them strong, plain, determined, courageous, self-reliant, and God-fearing men.

[1] *A Brief Character of the Low Countries*, 1652.

Therefore, we cannot wonder that Cæsar won some of his greatest victories mainly through the courage and devotion of his Dutch auxiliaries.[1] Tacitus, in more passages than can be enumerated, praises the Batavians for their bravery, loyalty, and military skill, and he tells us that they were the most courageous and the most warlike of all the German tribes and nations. Augustus made Batavians his bodyguard,[2] and other Roman Emperors followed his example. The manly virtues which the Dutch had acquired in their constant struggle with the hostile elements stood them in good stead when they had to fight for their country.

By the natural poverty of their country and the inclemency of its climate the early Dutch were compelled to work unceasingly, to be thrifty, and to stay at home, for the air was chilling and unwholesome in the Netherlands. Hence the habits of hard work, thrift, and domesticity, which descended to them from their early ancestors, became characteristics of the Dutch, and are so still. In Louis Bonaparte's words, the Dutch are 'naturally' fond of labour and of domestic life.[3]

Necessity is the mother not only of invention and of industry, but also of political power and greatness, which often come in the wake of prosperity. Necessity and the natural sterility of the soil gave birth not only to the industries and to the wealth, but also to the commercial and maritime preponderance which Tyre, Carthage, Venice, Genoa, Pisa, and Marseilles enjoyed in their time. The barrenness of the soil and the rigour of the climate compelled the early inhabitants of the Netherlands strenuously to engage in fishing and trade.

The beginning of the Dutch maritime industries must have been exceedingly difficult, for the instruments and appliances which are most necessary for the pursuit of fishing and trade had to be bought from abroad, since the Netherlands produced neither timber, metal, pitch, tar, hemp, nor flax, all of which are required for making the body of ships, sails, anchors, ropes, nets, &c. The Dutch had to acquire by barter the implements and appliances used in fishing, and, as the original products of the Netherlands

[1] Cæsar, *de Bello Gallico*, iv. 23, 26; v. 17, 22; vii. 67, 68; *de Bello Civili*, i. 83, 86; iii. 52, &c.

[2] Dio Cassius, 55.

[3] Louis Bonaparte, *Historical Documents*, 1820, vol. i. 29.

were of the poorest kind, the foundation of the Dutch fishing and shipping trade must have been exceedingly difficult.

The Dutch were brought up in the school of the sternest necessity, and their severe schooling has indelibly impressed itself upon their character. Owing to their unceasing industry and most rigid economy, which Nature had implanted in the character of the Dutch, the Netherlands became, in course of time, the wealthiest among nations, as will appear in the course of this book. Perhaps Adam Smith had in his mind the slow development of the prosperity of the thrifty Dutch when he wrote: 'Parsimony, and not industry, is the immediate cause of the increase of capital. Industry, indeed, provides the subject which parsimony accumulates. But whatever industry might acquire, if parsimony did not save and store up, the capital would never be greater.'[1] Two thousand years ago the wealthy Mæcenas more concisely expressed the same idea in the words: 'Great riches are gathered rather by spending little than by earning much.'[2]

The fact that a country which, by its natural conditions, was not worthy of being inhabited should have become the richest country in the world appeared a marvel to all other nations. Owen Feltham wrote of the Dutch 250 years ago: 'They are frugal to the saving of egg-shells, and maintain it for a maxim that a thing lasts longer mended than new. For providence they are the ants of the world, and, having nothing but what grass affords them, are yet for almost all provisions the storehouse of the whole of Christendom. What is it which there may not be found in plenty, they making by their industry all the fruits of the vast earth their own. They have not of their own enough materials to compile one ship, yet how many nations do they not furnish!'[3]

Sir William Temple, who, from 1667 to 1671, was the English Ambassador in the Netherlands, said of the Dutch: 'There are some customs or dispositions that seem to run generally through all the degrees of Dutchmen, such as a great frugality or order in their expenses. Riches commonly lie in

[1] Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, book ii. chap. i.

[2] Dio Cassius, 52.

[3] *A Brief Character of the Low Countries*, 1652, 61–63.

every man's having more than he spends, or, to put it more properly, in every man's spending less than he has coming in, be that what it will; nor does it enter into men's heads among the Dutch that the common course of expense should equal the revenue, but when this happens they think that they have lived, at least that year, to no purpose.[1]

The family life of the Dutch was pure and austere. The Dutch housewife was a model of industry and thrift and an enemy of luxury and of vain display. Of the Dutch woman it could always be said: 'She seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands; she rises while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and their task to her maidens. Her lamp goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the distaff and her hands to the spindle. She maketh for herself carpets of tapestry. Her clothing is of fine linen and purple. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.'[2] Woman maketh man. The Dutch women were a most potent factor in creating the wealth of the Netherlands.

Not indulging in vain frivolities and outdoor amusements, partly because of the unpleasantness of the climate, partly because of their extreme thriftiness, the Dutch sought diversion in study and in religion, and, not unnaturally, they inclined to seriousness in the one and to austerity in the other. The Dutch concentrated their minds as naturally upon the consideration of great religious, political, and economic problems as the Greeks, under the bright Ionian sky, busied themselves with the enjoyment of life and with the discussion of the plastic arts, of poetry and of the drama. Thus climatic reasons were responsible for the fact that the foundation of moral education and of regular schools has been laid by Dutchmen, and that the ideas of civil liberty, of religious toleration, of international law, of modern philosophy, &c., arose in Holland. Primary education, as known at present, was first introduced in the Netherlands,[3] and the printing presses were busy first in that country, as will appear in the following chapter.

[1] Temple, *United Provinces*, 1672, chap. iv.**

[2] Proverbs xxxi. 10–28.

[3] Treitschke, *Politik*, 1899, vol. i. 359.

Intelligent, serious, hard-working, and determined men who live closely together, who are used to co-operation, and who are in the habit of discussing among themselves serious subjects, do not easily submit to the rule of one man, especially if that rule be unjust. Therefore, Nature, which had taught the Dutch to be courageous, self-reliant, hard-working, thrifty, and helpful to one another, meant them to be ruled by a democratic government.

Democratic government is an old Germanic institution, for Tacitus tells us of the ancient Germans: 'In matters of inferior moment their chiefs decide; important questions are reserved for the whole community.'[1] And Montesquieu rightly traces the rise of the British Constitution to the political habits of our ancestors, who came from the forests of Germany and conquered Great Britain.[2] From the common ancestors of Englishmen and Dutchmen the political institutions and traditions of the Dutch and English took their rise, and their common origin caused them to be similar.

The foregoing brief survey shows that the natural conditions of the Netherlands were exceptionally severe, and that their natural resources were exceptionally poor. These hard and cruel conditions produced a race of independent, strong, self-reliant, and hard-working men. Thus Nature had created in the Netherlands an ideal human material for forming a free commonwealth, strong in war and in peace peaceful, fearless, and exceedingly jealous of its liberty and of its independence, a force most apt to create a new civilisation, to be the nucleus of a great state, to reform the world, and to build up a world-empire on the broad basis of democracy. Nature had meant the Dutch to become a great nation, one of the leading nations of the world. It is not Nature's fault, but men's fault, the politicians' fault, that Holland is now a third-rate Power, a shadow of its former self, a state with a great past but without a future, as will be seen in the course of this book.

[1] Tacitus, *Germania*, xi.

[2] Montesquieu, *Esprit des Lois*, xi. 6.

CHAPTER III

HOW THE FOUNDATION OF DUTCH POWER AND WEALTH WAS LAID

'The richest tracts of country are always most liable to be attacked. It was only the barrenness of the soil that preserved the territory of Athens through a long space of time quiet and undisturbed in the hands of its owners.'—THUCYDIDES, i. 2.

'All nations have been and are more or less happy, as they or their ancestors have had vigour of spirit, integrity of manners, and wisdom to invent such orders as have better or worse provided for the common good which was sought by all.—Sir ALGERNON SIDNEY, *Discourses concerning Government*, iii. 36.

WE have seen in the preceding chapter that the natural difficulties with which the Dutch had to contend, especially in the earliest times, when their rude and primitive industries and their very lives were at the mercy of every wind and of every wave, were so great that many wondered that the Netherlands ever became inhabited. Therefore, the greatest interest of the early history of the Netherlands lies not in the political events which took place under the obscure rulers who governed the Netherlands in the earliest ages, but in the triumph of the Dutch over the hostile elements of nature. Let us, therefore, follow the successful fight of the ancient Dutch against nature, and see how a huge morass, originally inhabited by a few savages, was converted into a civilised, highly cultivated, densely populated and prosperous country.

The earliest inhabitants of the Netherlands were probably men fleeing from persecution or from justice, as were the founders of Tyre, Carthage, Venice, and the United States. The first inhabitants of the Low Countries lived by hunting, supplemented by fishing; and when their number increased, and the animals in the aboriginal swamps and woods became scarce, they were

compelled in an increasing degree to rely for their food upon the harvest of the rivers and of the sea. Necessity made the early Batavians fishermen, and it is significant and worth remembering that from the time of the Phœnicians the fishing industry has been the mother of maritime and commercial greatness. The very name Sidon signifies fishery, and the implements used in fishing are said to have been invented in ancient Tyre,[1] with which emporium of international trade, according to the Old Testament, King David and King Solomon appear to have had considerable business transactions.[2]

When the fish in the rivers and in the shallow parts of the sea became insufficient for their needs, the Dutch fishermen had to venture into deeper water, and rafts and small boats became necessary. In the beginning, these were probably constructed from trees uprooted by the river, which often floated down the Rhine. At a very early time much of the fish caught was used for barter, and more than a thousand years ago the inborn thrift of the Dutch must have produced a moderate degree of prosperity in the Netherlands. Otherwise, the ubiquitous Northmen would not have found it worth their while to plunder the Dutch coasts in the ninth century after Christ.[3]

From the earliest historical times the fruitful valley of the Rhine has been inhabited by many wealthy people. The German emperors, princes, knights, and bishops liked to build their castles on the Rhine, in order to enjoy the excellent Rhenish wine under the best conditions.[4] The wealthy Rhenish prelates and noblemen were also fond of fresh fish, especially in Lent. They were the best customers of the early Dutch, and helped materially in laying the foundation of Holland's wealth.

The political history of the Dutch during the Middle Ages is most complicated and most involved. It would require many volumes to tell it in detail, for the Netherlands were divided into numerous tiny feudal and clerical possessions and self-governing towns, which constantly intrigued and fought, either among

[1] Roscher, *Nationalökonomik des Handels*, chap. x.

[2] 1 Kings v.; 2 Chronicles ii., &c.

[3] Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book v. chaps. iii., v., ix., &c.* W. H. Riehl, *Land und Leute*, chap. v.

themselves or with their feudal lords.[1] Therefore, the Dutch had not a history, but a hundred petty histories, as may be seen from their ancient chronicles, in those days when all noblemen, church dignitaries, and towns endeavoured to increase their power at the expense of their neighbours. In those times, the Dutch towns wrested from their feudal lords, who were in want of funds or of military assistance, the right of self-government and numerous privileges, which they guarded with the greatest jealousy.[2] Only in the fifteenth century were the individual political units of the Netherlands moulded into some kind of union by the Dukes of Burgundy and their heirs of the House of Hapsburg, as will be shown later on.[3]

Although it is not worth while to give details of the countless small and big civil and other wars which were waged in the Netherlands during the Middle Ages, it should be mentioned that these fights served to keep alive the aboriginal military spirit of the inhabitants.

In the thirteenth century Amsterdam, which was destined to become the Venice of the North, could hardly be called a town, for in 1204 the future commercial metropolis of the Netherlands, and of the world, consisted only of a small castle surrounded by a few fisher huts;[4] but Amsterdam grew rapidly, owing to its trade, and in 1342 it received the privileges already possessed by various other Dutch towns.[5]

As far back as the fourteenth century, the Dutch were known beyond the confines of their country as able seamen. About 1320 Marino Sanuto, the celebrated Venetian, praised the Frisians, the Hollanders, and the Zeelanders for their prowess and their skill in navigation, and prophesied their future greatness.[6] At that time some enterprising Dutchmen migrated to Venice, where they became acquainted with the exceedingly prosperous commerce of that Republic. Italian traders also

[1] Strada, *de Bello Belgico*, vol. i. book 1.
[2] Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, Voorrede.*
[3] See pages 39 and 60 ff.
[4] A. Anderson, *History of Commerce*, 1764, vol. i. 173.
[5] Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book x. chap. xxx.*
[6] Sanuto, *Secreta Fidelium*, ii. iv. 18.

began to take an interest in the budding Dutch towns. Lombardian merchants, who then were the merchants and bankers of the world, established themselves in Leyden and in Dordrecht, the ancient political and commercial capital of the Netherlands, which in those days was far more important than was Amsterdam.[1]

As early as the thirteenth century the Dutch had some manufactures; but those of Flanders and Brabant were far more important and flourishing, for Flanders and Brabant were then the Lancashire of Europe. Desirous of creating manufacturing industries in their country, the Counts of Holland attracted Flemish weavers to the Dutch towns by money grants and immunities from taxation, and thus the cloth manufacturing industry was, by the fostering hand of the Government, established in various parts of the Netherlands.[2]

No country in Europe contains, in proportion to its size, so many navigable canals as the present kingdom of the Netherlands, and particularly the province of Holland. The construction of these canals commenced as early as the twelfth century, while Great Britain began to construct canals only in the eighteenth century.[3] The fact that the Dutch started so early upon canal construction was due partly to their enterprise, and partly to the peculiar condition of their country. As the Netherlands were a huge swamp, the construction of roads was more difficult and more expensive than the cutting of canals, which at the same time were useful in draining the land. Where the ground was soft, and where inundations were to be feared, roads required deep artificial foundations, and had to be led over high embankments, but even the most carefully constructed roads, which had to be built with imported stones or native bricks, were liable to be swallowed up by the soft ground. Even at the present day roads and houses are occasionally swallowed up by the mud, notwithstanding the great advances made in the science of engineering.

In the thirteenth century the Netherlands did not form a State properly so called, for States, as understood at present, did

[1] Cerisier, *Histoire des Provinces Unies*, vol. i. 424.*

[2] *Ibid.* vol. ii. 28.*

[3] McCulloch, *Commercial Dictionary*, art. 'Canals.'

not exist. The general disintegration which, since the death of Charlemagne, had set in among the great feudal States of Europe, had created a large number of independent principalities, lordships, clerical estates, and self-governing cities. Hence the great European States were States rather in name than in fact. The aspect of the Netherlands, with its numerous petty potentates and tiny republics, resembled that of ancient Greece. Germany, France, Spain, Italy, and England also were loose conglomerations of independent political units. Although the feudal tie gave the various States the outward appearance of unity, they lacked both cohesion and organisation. The nations of Europe were divided against themselves by the encroachments of the vassals, who had become exceedingly powerful, and the national Diets were shams. The great feudal lords and the cities thwarted and fought each other; the central power, the executive, of the great European States, was weak and hardly respected. The Emperor of Germany was one of the weakest rulers in his Empire, for he could not command, but had to beg and entreat the haughty lords and cities for the needed supplies, and even for his daily expenses. There were then emperor-makers in Germany, and king-makers in England and France.

Through the lack of a strong central authority, and the dissensions among their component parts, which had possessed themselves of all political power, the great European States had become exceedingly weak for action. The great feudal lords and cities had learned to rely rather upon their individual strength than upon that of their nominal over-lords and of their country. Therefore, voluntary associations for mutual defence were formed by those who were threatened by a common danger. Towns, which had found out by experience that it was idle to rely upon the king, the emperor, or the National Diet for protection against attack, formed defensive leagues. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the great trading towns of Germany, under the guidance of Hamburg and Lübeck, entered upon such a confederation, and many non-German commercial towns joined that league. Thus an international union for the promotion and protection of commerce, the celebrated Hanseatic League, arose. Eighty of the most powerful cities of Germany formed, at one time, the basis of that alliance for the defence of trade. France

furnished it with Rouen, St. Malo, Bordeaux, Bayonne, and Marseilles; Spain with Barcelona, Seville, and Cadiz; the Low Countries with Antwerp, Dordrecht, Amsterdam, Bruges, Rotterdam, Ostend, and Dunkirk; Italy with Leghorn, Messina, and Naples; Portugal with Lisbon, and England with London.[1]

The Hanseatic League proved exceedingly effective for the purpose for which it had been created. It established factories among the great Northern Powers for the benefit of its members, it concluded commercial treaties, and it conducted successful wars against the powerful Kings of Norway and of Denmark. The Hanseatic League ruled the Northern Seas, and proved considerably stronger than the large but unorganised States which were enfeebled by the lack of union among the feudal lords and the cities.

The ever-present common danger of floods in the Netherlands had familiarised the people with local co-operation, but national co-operation was a thing unknown. The whole country was split into so many large and small political units, and each unit so jealously guarded its independence, its customs, and its privileges, that national co-operation, even against a foreign enemy, was impossible. The Dutch were, and are still, individualists *par excellence*, who easily placed private and pecuniary interests above national ones. However, the utility of a combination such as the Hanseatic League could not fail to impress upon the Dutch the truth that union is strength, and was bound to lead to some political co-operation among them. Consequently, it was only natural that, at an early period, defensive confederations arose in the Netherlands, and that, by the united efforts of those who were almost defenceless when standing alone, the privileges, rights, and customs of the small individual commonwealths of the Netherlands were maintained through centuries of strife.[2]

In the fourteenth century, the maritime power of the Dutch must have grown rapidly, for we read that they then lent to the English vessels for transporting their troops into France. This fact seems to show that, already at that period, the Dutch marine

[1] Heiss, *Histoire de l'Empire*, 1685, vol. ii. 343; Ward, *History of Law of Nations*, 1795, vol. ii. 278.

Ruth Putnam, *William the Silent*, 1895, vol. ii. 143.

was superior to that of England.[1] The development of shipping greatly benefitted Amsterdam, which, towards 1342, began to equal in commercial importance the ancient political capital of Holland, the town of Dordrecht.[2]

During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, international commerce and the shipping trade had greatly developed, in consequence of the mighty impetus which the Crusades had supplied. The vast hosts of Crusaders required a huge quantity of shipping for the transport of men, horses, and material, and thus kept the shipping trade of Europe exceedingly busy. Besides, the rude Christian warriors became, during the Crusades, acquainted with the luxuries of the East, and introduced a taste for Oriental silks, embroideries, tapestries, glass-ware, pottery, artistic metal-ware, spices, &c., among the wealthy classes of Europe. On their way to the East, the various crusading nations became familiarised with the productions peculiar to the different European countries through which they passed. Thus arose a desire for foreign productions and for international commercial intercourse. Asiatic produce was brought to the Italian coast towns, and travelled, together with the Italian and German productions, down the Rhine towards England, Denmark, Sweden, and Muscovy. The development of international trade was greatly assisted by the timely invention of the mariner's compass, which came into general use in the course of the fourteenth century. Vessels were no longer compelled to hug the tortuous shore in travelling from country to country, but could travel in a straight line from one country to another. The distances separating nations had become shorter.

At a time when there were in Italy, Flanders, and Brabant wealthy trading and manufacturing communities, England was, industrially at least, a barbarous country which exported raw produce, such as wool, tin, lead, and hides, and took in exchange Continental manufactures, French wines, and Oriental spices. The two streams of traffic from south to north and from north to south which passed through the Netherlands gave to the Dutch a splendid opportunity for embarking upon international commerce, and they made the best use of it. Their boats

[1] *Richesse de la Hollande*, vol. i. 12.*

[2] Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book x. chap. xxx.*

which carried fish and other commodities up the Rhine returned laden with merchandise, which they took to Flanders, Brabant, England, and the countries on the Baltic, and soon the Dutch became international carriers upon a moderate scale. Their fishing, their trade, and their thrift combined, gradually enriched them, and they began to spend money freely, not in ostentatious living as was done in the neighbouring towns of Brabant and Flanders, but in improving their country and its wealth-creating resources. With the money made in foreign trade the Dutch constructed canals and roads, built dykes, drained marshes, widened and deepened the mouths of the rivers, enlarged harbours, &c.

The great manufacturing and trading towns of Flanders, Brabant and Italy naturally became the Mecca of all enterprising Dutchmen who wished to make money. According to Lodovico Guicciardini, 'numerous Netherlanders travelled into Italy and brought back with them great improvements in architecture, painting, carving and engraving on copper, which they had acquired there, and they carried those arts into England, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Poland and Muscovy. Besides, many Netherlanders were sent for by the sovereigns of France, Spain and Portugal, and by wealthy foreign noblemen and cities, who gave them substantial salaries and rewards for their superior skill in these arts. Thus, the Netherlanders first perfected themselves in Italy, and afterwards they and their pupils spread themselves all over the rest of Europe, and taught everywhere those fine arts which, until then, had been unknown, and which, to a great measure, had before been confined to Italy.[1]

While the Dutch Netherlanders were occupied with some fishing, a little agriculture, and some foreign trade, and had begun to engage in manufacturing, their Western neighbours, the people of Flanders and Brabant, had acquired almost the monopoly in manufacturing, and had amassed enormous wealth. Bruges had become the great storehouse of the world and the magazine and mart for the exports of all nations.[2] The enormous wealth of Flanders and Brabant strangely contrasted,

[1] A. Anderson, *History of Commerce*, 1764, vol. i. 237, 238.

[2] See page 55.

at that time, with the poverty of neighbouring France, where much land was uncultivated and overgrown with weeds, while the people were reduced to the utmost degree of poverty through the Hundred Years' War with England, and terrible insurrections and civil wars. The French were by nature as thrifty and as industrious as the wealthy people of Brabant and Flanders, but their industries could not be developed during those warlike times.

According to the current theories of political economy, it is in the interests of an industrial nation that all other nations should be at peace and flourishing. This theory is erroneous. In reality, it is in the interest of an industrial nation that its customers among the nations are flourishing, and that its competitors among the nations are not flourishing. Great prosperity can be acquired in industries and trade only if great profits can be made; but international competition rapidly reduces industrial and commercial profits to a minimum. The fact that the towns of Flanders and Brabant had practically a monopoly in manufacturing created their immense wealth during the Middle Ages. When their monopoly ceased, their wealth vanished. It may be considered an axiom that a nation can derive great wealth by exporting its own manufactures and carrying on a great international commerce and shipping trade only if it has practically a monopoly. This will appear in the next chapter.

Up to 1383, Ypres was a most flourishing town. It was famous throughout Europe for its woollen and linen manufactures, and was supposed to have 200,000 inhabitants, a number almost incredible in those times, when the population of countries was small and the means of carriage by water and land were very imperfect. Having rebelled against the Count of Flanders, the inhabitants of Ypres were severely defeated, and after the defeat the town decayed. About 1400, the population was still between 80,000 and 100,000, and from 3,000 to 4,000 looms were still working; but towards 1490, Ypres possessed a population of only about 6,000, and but thirty looms.[1] Ypres, which had been the Manchester of the world, had become a poverty-stricken village.

[1] Blok, *Geschichte der Niederlande*, vol. i. 604.*

Lodovico Guicciardini tells us that 'weavers from Ypres' migrated to Leyden after 1400, where they started their manufactures,[1] and these men laid the foundation of the industrial greatness not only of the Netherlands, but of England as well. Up to the fall of Ypres, England was known to the industrial and commercial nations as a producer of raw material, chiefly wool, and the English were sarcastically called 'de schepers van Vlaanderen,' the shepherds of Flanders, by the wealthy Flemings who turned English wool into the finest cloth, and sold it to England and to other countries. However, in the time of Edward III. and Henry IV., English trade and industry began to develop or, rather, to be developed, in consequence of the encouragement which was bestowed upon it by the Government. By privileges and immunities hundreds of Flemish spinners and weavers were induced to settle in England. At the same time the industry of Flanders and Brabant was hampered by prohibiting the export of wool. Cloth manufacturing became general in England, and soon English woollen cloths swamped the markets of the Flemish towns.[2]

The decay of an industrial community is apt to prove a blessing to one or several other communities. The fall of Ypres was no exception to the rule, for it brought to the Dutch Netherlands and to England the seeds of industrial greatness. The enormous wealth of Flanders was due, chiefly, to its great woollen industry, its staple industry, which supplied the whole of Northern Europe with cloth, and England meant to capture that wealth. During many centuries the rulers of England unceasingly laboured to develop the manufacture of woollen cloth, and to transfer the wealth of Flanders to the English shores by prohibiting the export of raw wool and by encouraging the manufacture of cloth within the country. England's determined policy proved successful, and its success was facilitated by political events which will be considered in future chapters.

During the Middle Ages a lively trade took place between Holland and England. The Dutch brought to England goods of various kinds, especially cloth, and took thence raw material,

[1] *Descrizione di Tutti i Paesi Bassi*, 1567.*

[2] Blok, *Geschichte der Niederlande*, 1902, vol. i. 604.*

especially wool, which was used by their weavers. Leyden was for a long time celebrated for its woollen cloth, and it owed its wealth to that branch of manufacture. However, this Anglo-Dutch trade was frequently interrupted by the unceasing attempts of England to cripple the woollen industry on the Continent, and to transfer it to England, by prohibiting both the export of wool and the importation of woollen cloth. In 1464, for instance, Edward IV. prohibited the import of all produce, stuffs and manufactures of Holland, Zeeland and Friesland into England, Wales and Ireland.[1] This prohibition and many others prove that, already at that time, the manufacturing of woollen cloth must have been fairly considerable in the Dutch Netherlands.

A single article of commerce may make a nation wealthy and powerful. The economic and political greatness of England was founded on wool, as every student of economic history knows. That fact is immortalised in the symbolic Woolsack of the Lord Chancellor of England, which is a reminder of the period in which sheep-raising was the principal English industry. The woolsacks upon which the judges sat were placed in the House of Peers in the time of Queen Elizabeth, by order of that Queen, so that they should constantly be reminded of the Act of Parliament passed to prevent the export of wool,[2] for in those days wool was considered to be the principal source of British national wealth, and was then as important in the national economy of England as coal is now.

The economic and political greatness of the Netherlands was based on fish. Great political and economic events often spring from very small causes. An obscure Dutch fisherman, one William Beukelszoon of Biervliet, whose name is known hardly to ten English people, laid, towards the middle of the fourteenth century, the foundation of the political, commercial, maritime, and colonial supremacy of the Netherlands—by discovering a method of curing and barrelling herrings, whereby these fishes could be preserved during many months. At a period when the prohibition of eating butcher's meat during two days every week, and during forty days before Easter, was universal, because all

[1] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 41, 42.*

[2] Brewer, *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable.*

Europe was Roman Catholic, a supply of a subsidiary food of some sort or other was urgently needed. Therefore, the discovery of Beukelszoon was of the greatest consequence not only to the Dutch but to the whole Christian world.[1] After Beukelszoon's discovery, the herring industry became the staple industry of the Netherlands and the foundation of the wealth of the Dutch, as will be seen in the course of this book. Recognising the great service which Beukelszoon had rendered to his country, the mighty Emperor Charles V. visited his grave at Biervliet in 1550, and ordered a magnificent monument to be erected to record the memory of the man who had rendered so signal a service to his country. An economist truly said that Beukelszoon's invention 'contributed more, perhaps, than anything else to increase the maritime wealth and power of Holland.[2]

Beukelszoon's invention came at a most opportune moment. Formerly, the herrings used to frequent the Swedish coast and were caught off Skanor, between the south-west corner of Sweden and Denmark, by northern fishermen. But suddenly the herrings deserted the Swedish coast, and immense shoals of that most prolific fish made their appearance off the Dutch and British shores. Hoorn and Enkhuizen became the principal fishing towns. At Hoorn huge drag nets were invented, whilst Enkhuizen introduced those roomy and commodious boats called 'busses' (buizen) which could easily be handled by a few men, and were therefore most economical.[3] Thus, the Dutch were suddenly enabled to gather in the cheapest way unlimited quantities of fish, which they could sell throughout Europe, since, through Beukelszoon's invention, the herrings could be preserved during an almost unlimited space of time.

On November 18, 1421, the growing prosperity of the Netherlands was rudely interrupted by a terrible inundation. A fearfully strong gale blowing from the north-west caused, at the same time, the sea to overflow the dykes and the rivers to overflow the dams. Holland, Zeeland, and Frisia were simultaneously attacked, and the whole of South Holland was submerged. Dordrecht became separated from the mainland, its whole

[1] McCulloch, *Treatises and Essays*, 1859, 342.

[2] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 21.*

[3] Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book xii. chap. xxi.*

territories having been torn away from it by the sea, and 100,000 persons were drowned and all their goods and substance utterly lost. In 1514, the points of church steeples could still be seen above the water,[1] and according to Moriosotus they were visible even a hundred years later.[2]

While the Dutch were rapidly creating and developing the industries of their naturally poor and wretched country, they by no means neglected the arts of war. Commerce and industry are called the arts of peace, and countless poets have, since Virgil, sung the praises of 'gentle' trade and commerce, as a means of uniting nations. Poets are notoriously bad business men, and trade is a very prosaic occupation which is totally devoid of romantic sentiment. Trade and commerce, far from uniting nations, have spread jealousy and hatred among them, and have caused endless wars. The trade relations of States resemble the relations existing between landlord and tenant, between lender and borrower, and, when profits are large and chiefly on one side, they resemble those existing between a usurer and his victim, and then give rise to 'pride, vainglory, and hypocrisy' on the part of the prosperous purveyor nation and to 'envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness' on the part of its victim. Energetic and warlike nations naturally envy commercial nations for their wealth, and habitually make war upon them with the object of despoiling them. For these reasons, Sparta made war against Athens, Rome against Carthage, the Goths against Rome, the Turks against Constantinople, and great European coalitions attacked Venice in the sixteenth century,[3] the Netherlands in the seventeenth century,[4] and England in the eighteenth century.[5] Besides, the great commercial nations of the world have always fought among themselves for their trade, as may be seen from the numerous bitter trade wars between Venice and Genoa, between the English and the Dutch. Perhaps the greater number of wars which the world has seen were economic wars, wars waged for trade and commerce. Nearly all the great wars which the Netherlands and England have fought during the last three centuries have been trade wars. Dynastic wars and wars fought

[1] Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book xii. chap. ii.*

[2] A. Anderson, *History of Commerce*, 1764, vol. i. 247, 248.

[3] League of Cambray, 1508. [4] See page 366 ff. [5] See page 433

for, purely political reasons, wars of ambition and wanton conquest, are few.

For a long time the Hanse towns had almost monopolised the trade of the Baltic and of the North Sea, having crushed by force of arms all opposition to their trading monopoly. When the Dutch appeared in the Baltic, the Hanse towns tried to oust them by force. Dutch traders were frequently robbed and insulted by the 'Easterlings.' As their complaints were in vain, a number of Dutch towns fitted out a fleet, and in 1437 attacked and defeated the Hanseatic ships in numerous encounters. At that time the Hanse towns were already greatly weakened through their wars with Eric, King of Denmark. So elated were the Dutch with their victories, which were won by the intrepidity and the excellent seamanship of their sailors, that they tied brooms to their mastheads, to indicate that they had swept the sea. Henceforth, the Netherlands were the paramount naval power in the seas of Northern Europe.[1]

The Hanseatic League had wielded a tyrannical power in the Baltic, and had made itself feared and disliked. Therefore the victory of the Dutch was greeted with satisfaction by the northern Powers which had been mercilessly exploited by the Hansa, and the King of Sweden gave to the Dutch freedom of commerce throughout his dominions, a privilege which formerly had been held by the Hansa.[2] According to de Witt, the victory of the Dutch over the Hansa had the most far-reaching consequences, for he tells us: 'Hitherto the Hanse towns on the south shores of the Baltic Sea had been the principal general carriers and mariners in the northern seas, but they now gradually lost their position to the Dutch, and the Hanseatic owners of trade ships were, by degrees, compelled by the energy of the Dutch manufacturers, fishermen, and skippers to forsake the Eastern countries and to settle in Holland.'[3] Thus the Dutch gave the death-blow to the Hanseatic League, and erected the foundation of their eminence in trade by force of arms on the ruins of the trade of the Hanse towns.

The war of 1437 and the following years in which the

[1] Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book xii. chaps. xxxi., xxxii.*

[2] Meursius, *Historia Danica*, 5.

[3] A. Anderson, *History of Commerce*, 1764, vol. i. 261.

Netherlanders, for the first time, asserted their naval power among the nations of Europe, was waged for the expansion of Dutch trade. Having found out that they could not trade freely with other nations, and that private war was waged against their merchant ships by means of privateers, the Dutch determined to conquer for themselves that freedom of trade which other nations denied to them, and the governments of Holland and Zeeland resolved henceforth to give state protection to their trade in time of war.[1] The Dutch had found out that commerce and wealth do not fall to the ablest unless he is, at the same time, the strongest. Therefore they determined to become strong upon the sea.

While the towns of the Netherlands were rapidly growing, owing to their industrial successes, and while their prestige was quickly increasing through their successes in naval war, the art of printing by movable types was discovered by Laurens Janszoon Koster of Haarlem. Although the Germans claim that the honour of this invention is due to Gutenberg, their countryman, it seems perhaps more likely that Koster was the inventor. Koster began printing towards 1430. As the Dutch, owing to their domestic habits and the peculiar bent of their mind, were exceedingly studious, a great demand for books and a mighty printing industry arose from this invention. Everywhere in the Netherlands printing presses sprang up, and Bibles were soon to be found in every house. Whereas formerly a copy of the Bible, tolerably written on vellum, used to cost four or five hundred crowns, printed Bibles could soon be bought for four or five crowns.[2]

By means of printed books knowledge and enlightenment rapidly spread in the Netherlands. The reaction against the Church of Rome, the representatives of which had made themselves very obnoxious to the population, was powerfully assisted by countless books issued from the Dutch press, and the Netherlands became the birthplace and the stronghold of Protestantism.

The seeds of the Reformation were sown in the Netherlands long before the advent of Luther. Towards the end of the fourteenth century the teaching of Wycliffe became widely known

[1] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 388.*

[2] Brandt, *History of the Reformation*, 1720, vol. i. 23.**

in the Netherlands, and his denunciations of popery helped to open the eyes of the Dutch.[1] Soon there arose numerous reformers who denounced the corruption of the Church. Among the early Dutch reformers Doctor Wessel Hermanson Greudsfort, Rudolphus Agricola, John van Goch, and Tileman were most prominent. These men were the heralds of Erasmus, the greatest of Dutch reformers.

In 1647, Erasmus of Rotterdam, 'the greatest scholar of his age, and one of the greatest of all ages,'[2] was born. He was the intellectual father of the Protestant Reformation and the inspirer of Luther, who was his junior by sixteen years. The contemporary *bon mot* among scholars, 'Aut Lutherus Erasmisat aut Erasmus Lutherisat,'[3] reminds us how strongly Erasmus and Luther influenced one another. Through Erasmus the Netherlands gave to the world the idea of the Reformation, and their printing presses spread that idea far and wide, for the Dutch printers issued books not only in Dutch and Latin, but in all languages. They became printers to all nations.

During the second half of the fifteenth century the industries of the Dutch continued to expand, owing to the diligence, energy, and thrift of the people. Great mechanical improvements were introduced in all the industries, especially in shipbuilding,[4] and labour-saving machinery driven by wind, which placed the Dutch in the forefront among manufacturing nations, came into general use. The fisheries flourished through those inventions which have been already mentioned, and the naval power of the Netherlands continued to grow with the expansion of Dutch trade, for in the olden days a merchant ship could easily be converted into a man-of-war.

The growing wealth and influence of the Dutch aroused the jealousy of the declining Hanseatic towns, which, through the rise of the Netherlands, had lost their profitable monopoly of the northern trade, and occasionally battles were fought in the Baltic between Dutch ships and the ships of Lübeck and of other towns. At last the contending Powers concluded a treaty of commerce by which the Dutch received all they had fought

[1] Brandt, *History of the Reformation*, 1720, vol. i. 17.**
[2] Bayle, *Dictionary*. [3] Moreri, *Dictionnaire Historique*.
[4] Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book xiii. chap. xx.*

for—freedom of trade and equality of treatment in the northern seas. However, freedom of trade in the Baltic did not mean equality of opportunities for the victorious Dutchmen and the defeated Easterlings. It meant the extinction of the trade of the German towns. Muscovy, Sweden, and Denmark sent their produce, chiefly timber, hides, tallow, pitch, grain, and other raw materials, to the Netherlands, Flanders, France, and Spain, and received in return Flemish manufactured articles, French wines, Oriental spices, &c. Nature had placed the Netherlands in the very centre of that trade route, while Lübeck, Bremen, and Hamburg lay far away from it. Therefore, freedom of trade in the Baltic for the Hanseatic towns and the Netherlands gave to the latter an incontestable superiority in trade in those seas, in which the German towns had formerly been supreme. In 1467 Philip of Burgundy admiringly wrote to the Pope: 'Holland and Zeeland are rich islands inhabited by a brave and warlike people, who have never been conquered by their neighbours, and who carry on their commerce on every sea.'[1]

After they had acquired by conquest the trade of the Baltic in their war against the Hanseatic League, the Dutch became the great champions of freedom of trade, and the determined enemies of those extensive trade monopolies which all foreign nations had reserved for themselves. The early Dutch were hard-headed, practical business men. Their championship of freedom of trade was not based upon their faith in an abstract economic doctrine, but upon their knowledge that the excellence of the Dutch seamen, the ability of the Dutch shipowners, shipbuilders, and merchants, and the plentifulness and cheapness of money in the Netherlands, together with the advantageous geographical position of their country, gave them such a superiority over their competitors that they were certain to obtain absolute supremacy in international trade, provided equal opportunities were given to all. For practical, not for philosophical, reasons, freedom of trade became the settled policy of the Dutch. To the Dutch, free trade was a weapon for killing the enemy, foreign competition. However, their conception of freedom of trade was somewhat one-sided, for the Dutch constantly endeavoured to secure for themselves freedom of trade, but, at the same time,

[1] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 37.*

strove to prevent their competitors from enjoying that privilege by putting obstructions in their way.

Bismarck said, 'free trade is the weapon of the strongest';[1] and the Dutch, while they were commercially the strongest nation, wielded the weapon of free trade with considerable skill to their great advantage. But in course of time they found that freedom of trade was a two-edged weapon; that it is excellent for the strong, but very bad for the weak, as will appear from their history.

In the course of the fifteenth century the naval power of the Dutch grew mightily. In 1475, the towns of Amsterdam, Hoorn, Enkhuizen, Monnikendam, and Edam equipped a fleet for the protection of their commerce against France, but the Dutch were severely defeated, the town of Hoorn alone losing thirty ships.[2] It is noteworthy that their naval expeditions were not undertaken by the Count of Holland and Zeeland, or by his Stadtholder, or by the States Provincial, but by five individual towns. The co-operation of these five Dutch towns brings to mind the co-operation of the five English towns, the Cinque Ports, Dover, Hastings, Hythe, Romney, and Sandwich, which at one time were the greatest maritime towns of England, and which had to provide for the naval defence of the country before a national organisation for naval defence had been created.

The naval war against the French was renewed by the Dutch in 1477, and this time the Netherlands obtained, at least for a time, the command of the sea.[3] Their victories over the great Hanseatic League had given to a few Dutch towns the courage to contend with the kingdom of France for naval supremacy.

In 1437, the Netherlands were seized by Duke Philip of Burgundy, who governed the country until 1467, the year of his death. Under the Burgundian rule, the power and prosperity of the Netherlands grew still further, and arts and sciences flourished, but the country was governed in a high-handed manner by its proud rulers. The ancient rights and privileges of the individual towns and provinces were disregarded, and their protests and representations were not listened to. The successor

[1] Speech, June 14, 1882.

[2] Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book xiv. chap. iii.*

[3] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 38.*

of Duke Philip, Charles the Bold, who governed the Netherlands from 1467 to 1477, was a crowned madman. He was as ambitious of military glory as was Alexander the Great, and as insanely reckless as was Charles XII. of Sweden. He was constantly at war with France, Lorraine, and Switzerland. After having been most successful against France and Lorraine, his troops were totally defeated by the Swiss at Granson and Morat, and Charles was killed before Nancy. His death was greeted with joy by the Dutch, whose rights and privileges he had brutally trodden under foot, and whose money he had squandered in reckless wars.

The Dutch resolved to safeguard themselves for the future against arbitrary rule similar to that of Charles the Bold. When Princess Mary, his daughter, who succeeded her father, convoked the States General of the Netherlands, she was told that the necessary supplies would not be voted by them unless she would sign a charter confirming the ancient rights and privileges of the Netherlands. The scene which took place at Runnymede, on Trinity Monday, 1215, was re-enacted in the Netherlands in March 1477, and it had the most far-reaching consequences.

In substance, the Magna Charta of the Dutch, the 'Great Privilege,' as it is called, contained the following stipulations, which should be read very attentively, first, because they show that the Dutch mind and the English mind worked in a similar direction, when laying down in a well-considered document the basis of the national liberties; secondly, because the resemblance of the Dutch and English charters shows that the ancient Dutch and English had a similar conception of popular rights, and of civil liberty, and that similar under-currents influenced English and Dutch political life; thirdly, because certain tendencies and ideas contained in the great Dutch charter form the unseen foundations of Dutch history and furnish us with a key which enables us to understand the strange suicidal influences which we constantly meet with in Dutch history, influences which have been responsible for the decline of the Netherlands.

The stipulations of the great Dutch charter were as follows:

'The Duchess shall not marry without consent of the Estates of her Province. All offices and employments in her gift shall be bestowed on natives only. No man shall fill two offices. No

office shall be farmed. The "Great Council and Supreme Court of Holland" is to be re-established. Causes shall be brought before it on appeal from the ordinary courts. It shall have no jurisdiction in matters belonging to the provincial and municipal tribunals. The Estates and cities are guaranteed in their rights not to be summoned to justice beyond the limit of their territory. The cities, in common with all the Provinces of the Netherlands, may hold Diets as often as they please and at such places as they choose. No new taxes shall be imposed but by consent of the Provincial Estates. Neither the Duchess nor her descendants shall begin either an offensive or defensive war without consent of the Estates. In case of war being illegally undertaken, the Estates are not bound to contribute to its maintenance. In all public and legal documents the Dutch language is to be employed. The commands of the Duchess shall be invalid, if conflicting with the privileges of a city. The seat of the Supreme Council is transferred from Mechlin to the Hague. No money shall be coined, nor its value raised or lowered, but by consent of the Estates. Cities are not to be compelled to contribute to impositions which they have not voted. The sovereign shall come in person before the Estates to make his request for supplies.'[1]

If we now glance at the great English Charter of 1215, we find a remarkable resemblance to the Dutch document, for Magna Charta proclaims:

'That England is governed by an hereditary sovereign, ruling with limited powers, and bound to summon and consult a parliament of the whole realm, comprising hereditary peers and elected representatives of the Commons. That without the sanction of Parliament no tax of any kind can be imposed, and no law can be made, repealed, or altered. That no man be arbitrarily fined or imprisoned. That no man's property or liberties be impaired, and that no man be in any way punished except after a lawful trial. That trial shall take place by jury. That justice shall not be sold nor be delayed.'[2]

If we analytically compare the Dutch 'Great Privilege' and the English Magna Charta, which lack of space forbids to

[1] Motley, *Rise of the Dutch Republic*, Introduction, sect. viii.*

[2] Creasy, *English Constitution*, chap. xiii.

give in full, we find, notwithstanding their great resemblance, a most important difference between the two documents. The Dutch charter strips the sovereign of the power of the purse, of the law and of the sword, and distributes that power indiscriminately among the provinces and towns, giving to each of the numerous tiny units self-government in all things. The English charter, in limiting the power of the king to do wrong, vests the power of the law in the people, the power of the purse in a national assembly, which is a faithful representative of the nation, but leaves to the sovereign the power of the sword. The English peers and bishops who wrung the charter from King John wisely desired to leave to their ruler a considerable amount of power for maintaining the unity of the nation by means of a strong central authority, a strong national organisation and a strong army.

The English charter put the power taken from an arbitrary king in the hands of the great territorial magnates, who, through managing their vast territorial possessions and their experience of war, had much practical knowledge useful for ruling the State; the Dutch charter gave nearly all the power to the burghers, whose experience was limited to their business. The English charter confirmed at length the privileges of the great national dignitaries, the bishops and peers; the Dutch charter proclaimed the privileges of the burghers. The English charter was an aristocratic, national, statesmanlike and far-seeing measure; the Dutch was a democratic, parochial, and short-sighted measure. The English idea was to maintain, control, and build up; the Dutch idea was to pull down, to give liberty to all, authority to none. The English charter was dictated by a broad-minded, far-seeing, and manly spirit, a spirit which tended towards national and imperial expansion; the Dutch charter was dictated by the parochial ideas of local political magnates anxious to maintain their local importance, and of industrious traders, who thought more of their business profits than of their country, two sets of men who did not know the meaning of the word nation, and whose mental vision was limited by the boundaries of their parish, and the walls of their shops.

While Magna Charta contained the germ of the future greatness of the Anglo-Saxon race, the 'Great Privilege,' which

placed individual and parochial interests high above national interests, contained the germ of national disintegration and decay. Through their Magna Charta the Netherlands were destined to have many heads, but no head; many minds, but no mind; to be swayed by many, but directed by none.

The Dutch politicians and burghers looked back instead of looking forward. They saw that through individual energy an uninhabitable morass had been converted into a prosperous, populous and powerful country; that a few individual Dutch towns had triumphed over the great Hanseatic League and defeated the ships of France. Hence, they did not perceive the necessity of a national union, of a national organisation and of a national defence.

During more than a century there had been two political parties in the Dutch towns, the Hoeks and the Kabbeljaus, which had constantly been fighting one another. The Hoeks were the aristocrats, the Kabbeljaus were the burghers, and, after endless quarrels and wars, the burghers, the middle class, had defeated the aristocracy, which, in the Netherlands, as in all countries, was the unifying, the national and the imperial element. Henceforth the burghers identified sovereignty with tyranny, a national organisation with aristocratic rule, and they sought safety from aristocratic rule and the maintenance of their supremacy in decentralisation. Meaning to introduce self-government, they created an administrative disorganisation and chaos which were to prove fatal to the Netherlands.

Bismarck wrote in his memoirs: 'Mistakes committed in statesmanship are not always punished at once, but they always do harm in the end. The logic of history is a more exact and a more exacting accountant than is the strictest national auditing department.'[1] The history of the Netherlands illustrates the truth of this maxim. Two hundred years after the Dutch had wrung from a woman their charter of local rights and privileges, and had obtained the preponderance of individual and local interests over national interests—a preponderance which is inimical to patriotism, national organisation, national efficiency, national defence and national policy—they were to feel the retribution of history. *Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht.*

[1] Bismarck, *Gedanken und Erinnerungen*, vol. ii. 218.

CHAPTER IV

A BRIEF HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF COMMERCIAL AND MARITIME SUPREMACY AND AN INQUIRY INTO THE CAUSES OF THE GREATNESS AND DECAY OF COMMERCIAL STATES

'All states are in perpetual war with all. For that which we call peace is no more than merely a name, whilst in reality Nature has set all communities in an unproclaimed but everlasting war against each other.'—PLATO, *de Legibus*, lib. i.

'It is a law of Nature common to all mankind, which no time shall annul or destroy, that those who have more strength and excellence shall bear rule over those who have less.'—DIONYSIUS OF HALICARNASSUS, i. 5.

'Whilst human nature continues what it is, the same organisation in States, the same discipline in armies, the same virtues and dispositions of princes and magistrates, derived by interest or imitation into the customs and humours of the people, will ever have the same effects upon the strength and greatness of all governments as well as upon the happiness and safety of those that obey.'—SIR WILLIAM TEMPLE, *Observations upon the United Provinces*, Preface.

THE history of the rise and decline of the Netherlands is but a chapter in the great history of commercial supremacy which still remains to be written, and which ought to be written. Such a history would be wonderfully enlightening to all those who are short-sighted enough to believe that any one nation, be it Great Britain or the United States or France or Germany, is bound to remain prosperous because it is prosperous at present, because it has been prosperous for a long time, and because its prosperity appears to rest upon a solid and permanent foundation. It will be equally enlightening to all those who look at national affairs with the eye of the shopkeeper and who believe that 'competition' is the soul of trade and 'cheapness,' the principal cause of industrial and commercial success, and therefore the ideal to be pursued.

A glance into the history of commercial supremacy may appear a digression in this book. However, it will be very useful because it will show us that perhaps nothing in the world is less stable than commercial and maritime supremacy and because it will show us the fourfold root of commercial and maritime supremacy. Therefore it will greatly help us to understand the causes which led to the prosperity and to the impoverishment, to the rise and to the decline of the Netherlands.

The Phœnicians were the first great commercial nation of which we have some knowledge. They inhabited a strip of coast to the north of Palestine which was not sufficiently fruitful to maintain its inhabitants, but which was rich in timber and in harbours. Phœnicia, situated between the great and highly cultivated States lying about the Euphrates and Egypt, was the natural centre for the great trade between Assyria, Babylonia, Media and Persia on the one hand, and Egypt and Palestine on the other hand. Through their central position in relation to the greatest civilised states of antiquity and through the trading proclivities of their citizens, Sidon and Tyre became the storehouses and distributing centres of the exports of the then civilised world. The world's trade was carried on by Phœnicians. Factories of the Phœnicians were found in the ruins of Nineveh and Memphis. The Phœnicians did a large international trade in exchanging the spices, drugs, precious stones, pearls, ivory, and other products of Arabia and India for gold, silver, tin, linen, amber, &c., fetched from Europe and Africa. Their voyages appear to have extended as far as Cornwall and the Scilly Islands, whence they fetched the tin which was mined under Phœnician supervision. Finding their territory too small, the Phœnicians founded countless colonies in Cyprus and Rhodes, and on the Mediterranean coast, which later on fell into the hands of the Greeks and Carthaginians. They worked mines in Spain with slave labour, and, according to Strabo, established three hundred towns on the west coast of Africa.[1]

While extending their trade, the Phœnicians neglected their agriculture. They bought their corn from Palestine[2] and other

[1] Pietschmann, *Geschichte der Phönizier*; Heeren, *Phœnicians*; Rawlinson, *Phœnicians*, &c.

[2] 1 Kings v. 11 and 2 Chronicles ii. 10.

countries, and they relied upon foreign mercenaries, 'the men of Persia, of Lud, and of Phut,' for their defence, as we may read in the Bible.[1]

Phœnicia was probably at the height of her power and glory from 850 to 550 B.C., and she was a mighty civilising force in the ancient world. According to Strabo, the Greeks were taught astronomy and arithmetic by Sidon and Tyre; and the Phœnicians were believed to have discovered the use of weights and measures, and of money, and to have invented many arts such as glass-making, weaving and purple-dyeing, for which they were celebrated in the earliest times. Homer praises repeatedly the beautiful Phœnician manufactures. The Phœnicians are believed to have invented alphabetic writing and the art of keeping accounts. The arts of shipbuilding and navigation also were ascribed to the Phœnicians; and, if we may credit Herodotus, the sailors of Sidon and Tyre doubled the Cape of Good Hope two thousand years before Vasco da Gama.[2]

During several centuries the Phœnicians had practically the monopoly of international trade. The Egyptians, who might have competed with them in the international trade on favourable terms, owing to the excellent geographical position of their country, and who might have traded directly with the great kingdoms of Asia Minor, did not mix with strangers, owing to religious scruples, and therefore did not care to engage in commerce. Their neighbours, the Jews, for similar reasons abstained from trade, and were, according to Josephus, almost exclusively an agricultural nation.

In course of time, culture spread westward and northward from Asia Minor to Greece, Italy, the south of France, and the north of Africa. Greeks and Carthaginians embarked upon commerce, and began to compete with the Phœnicians and to capture much Phœnician trade. Through their colonies in Asia Minor, the Greeks probably monopolised the trade in that part of the world to the great dissatisfaction of the Phœnicians, and we therefore cannot wonder when Herodotus tells us that the Phœnicians were the cause of the tremendous wars between Persia and Greece,[3] and that Phœnician ships fought at Salamis

[1] Ezekiel xxvii. 10. [2] Herodotus, *Melpomene*.
[3] Herodotus, *Clio*.

against the Athenians, who defeated them. Through the competition of Greece and Carthage, the Phœnicians gradually lost their maritime and commercial supremacy, and at last the great Phœnician towns were ruined by the aggression of the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Persians, and of Alexander the Great. Thus the great commerce of Phœnicia, her countless colonies, her celebrated industries, and her vast accumulated riches simultaneously disappeared, and the country became almost a desert.

Commercial and maritime preponderance in the eastern half of the Mediterranean next fell to Athens, which became the trading centre of the eastern part of the civilised world. 'She made the Piræus, as it were, a common mart in the midst of all Greece, where there was such a variety of necessaries and merchandise, that what was difficult to be found in small quantities in other places, it was easy to find here in the greatest abundance.'[1] 'The grandeur of Athens caused the produce of the whole earth to be sent to that town.'[2]

The trading prosperity of Athens turned the heads of her citizens, who believed, to paraphrase Cobden, that Athens was, and always would be, the greatest commercial State in the world, for that sober historian Xenophon wrote: 'The Athenians are the only nation among the Greeks and barbarians who can possess wealth; for if other States are rich in timber for shipbuilding, or steel, or brass, or flax, where can they dispose of these unless they sell them to the rulers of the sea? Our enemies are excluded from the use of the sea, and without labour we enjoy all the earth produces by means of the sea.'[3]

Athens became so wealthy that, according to the speeches of Demosthenes, she financed many of the poorer cities far and near with her accumulated capital. Therefore the Athenians could live with little work by their commerce and the interest which they received from their foreign and colonial investments. More than twenty thousand citizens lived on the contributions and tribute which were received from allied and subject States.[4] Athens became a capitalist country and the banker of the Greek world.

[1] Isocrates, *Panegyric*. [2] Thucydides, book ii.
[3] Xenophon, *Athenian Republic*, ii.
[4] Aristotle, *Constitution of Athens*, 24.

The Athenians lived largely, perhaps chiefly, upon foreign food. They imported yearly immense quantities of wheat from the Crimea, and insured the security of their food supply by fortifying and garrisoning the Dardanelles.[1] From Demosthenes we learn that the Athenians imported more grain than any other nation.[2] Demagogues in power sold to the citizens grain under cost price in order to buy votes, and gratis distributions of corn were common.[3] The masses lived largely on charity. The magnificent buildings which adorned Athens were paid for out of the profits arising from the Athenian foreign trade, for the territory of Athens was so stony and poor that the barrenness of the soil had in the olden times compelled the Athenians to take to the sea in order to earn a living. Like the Phœnicians, the Athenians relied on foreign mercenaries for their defence, when they had become wealthy. The native population was devoted to trade and to amusements.

Sparta, the great military land Power, envied Athens for her wealth, her naval supremacy and her influence[4] and attacked her, and in the lengthy wars which took place between these two countries, Athens lost her supremacy in trade, and her colonies, to other nations. Her foreign debtors ceased to pay interest, and the allied and subject States tribute, when Athens was no longer feared because of her strength, nor respected for her wealth.

Commercial supremacy in the eastern Mediterranean next fell to Rhodes, which had kept neutral during the protracted war between Sparta and Athens, and which had thus secured much of the Athenian trade. The island of Rhodes had some excellent harbours, a central position on the important trade routes between Greece and Asia Minor, and the best maritime and commercial laws of antiquity, which served as a model to the Roman lawgivers. The Rhodians were reputed to be the best seamen of ancient times, they were worthy successors of the Athenians and, according to Polybius, they obtained in the eastern Mediterranean the empire of the sea, and became the wealthiest among the Greek nations. The fortune of war, the

[1] MacCulloch, *Treatises and Essays*, 1859, 269.
[2] Speech against Leptines.
[3] Curtius, *Griechische Geschichte*, vol. ii. 215.
[4] Thucydides, book i.

geographical position of the island and the culture of the inhabitants created the commercial greatness of Rhodes. During many centuries Rhodes was as celebrated as a seat of learning as Athens and Phœnicia had been before her. The schools of Rhodes were famous throughout the ancient world. Cicero and Pompey studied at Rhodes, and Julius Cæsar was taken by pirates when he was on the way to the University of the world.

While the Greeks had become supreme in the trade of the eastern Mediterranean, Carthage, a Phœnician colony, which had become populous by receiving numerous refugees from Phœnicia, had developed a large and rapidly growing international trade, and had begun to occupy and assimilate the Phœnician and Greek colonies of Sardinia, Sicily and Spain, and to found numerous colonies of her own in Europe and Africa. In extending their trade, the Carthaginians came into collision with their Greek competitors, who possessed numerous colonies in Sicily and on the Italian mainland. The rivalry between Greeks and Carthaginians must have been exceedingly keen, for it was probably not by chance that the enormous combined expedition of the Carthaginians and Phœnicians against the Greek colonies in Sicily, in which, according to Herodotus, 3,000 Carthaginian ships and 300,000 men were engaged,[1] coincided with the celebrated Persian attack upon Greece under Xerxes, which was supported by Phœnicia.

The Carthaginians undertook the expedition to Sicily, evidently with the object of destroying the prosperity of their Greek competitors. In the same year, 480 B.C., in which Themistocles defeated the Persian and Phœnician navies at Salamis—the Phœnician contingent was apparently the most important part—Gelon of Syracuse destroyed an immense Carthaginian-Phœnician force commanded by Hamilcar at Himera in Sicily.[2] Greek civilisation proved victorious over Semitic civilisation simultaneously in the east and in the west. In all probability the Persian attack upon Greece was instigated by the commercial jealousy not only of Phœnicia, as Herodotus tells us, but of Carthage as well. Hence it was only natural that the Carthaginians renewed their attack upon Sicily whilst the Greeks were engaged in the suicidal Peloponnesian War.

[1] Herodotus, *Polyhymnia.* [2] *Ibid.*

The Phœnicians and Greeks had spread civilisation and had founded flourishing towns everywhere on the borders of the Mediterranean. The centre of civilisation had moved westward from Phœnicia. The decline of Greece and her subjection to Rome gave commercial supremacy throughout the Mediterranean to Carthage. Carthage, being situated in the very centre of the great Mediterranean traffic, near the present town of Tunis, became very prosperous, especially as the decline of Phœnicia and of Greece had given to Carthage almost the monopoly of the world's trade, and she ruled the sea as absolutely as Rome ruled the land.

In course of time Rome and Carthage came into collision. Spain was the India of Carthage. From Spain Carthage received the wool for her textile industries and immense quantities of gold, silver, tin, lead, copper and precious stones. Only the inexhaustible gold and silver mines of Spain enabled Carthage to sustain her wars against the Romans.[1] The Romans had invaded Sicily and Spain, and Carthage was determined to defend her most valuable colonies and settlements from Roman encroachment, while Rome was equally determined to lay hands on the wealth of the great sea Power which lived precariously on foreign food, and was defended not by a national army but by foreign mercenaries. History repeated itself. The strong but poor military Power attacked the wealthy but unwarlike commercial nation; the national armies of Rome destroyed the mercenary forces of Carthage, and the foremost commercial and maritime Power of the world disappeared.

Cicero summed up the policy of all military Powers and of Rome in particular in the words: 'Is any State that is known to be rich allowed to enjoy peace? or have the generals of Rome ever permitted a wealthy State to live in quiet?'[2] The destruction of Carthage and of the smaller commercial nation made Rome, the uncommercial, the centre of the world's trade. The centre of the world's power became the centre of the world's wealth. The wealth, not only of Carthage but almost of the whole world, was swept into Rome by the conquerors with an iron broom, and, up to the fall of the West Roman Empire, Rome maintained her enormous wealth and her commercial supremacy.

[1] Diodorus Siculus, iv.

[2] Cicero, *Oratio pro Lege Manilia.*

Although the Romans possessed originally neither mercantile nor maritime spirit, skill and experience, they rapidly monopolised the wealth and the trade of the world. Roman merchants were treated preferentially by the law throughout the gigantic empire, and restrictions were placed upon the trade of foreign nations. Thus the trade of the world and the riches of the world were forced into the hands of Roman citizens.

Her prosperity became fatal to Rome. Having neglected her agriculture, as Phœnicia, Athens, Carthage and Rhodes had done before her, Rome became a huge town living exclusively on foreign food. Farming in Italy became unprofitable and was abandoned, fields were transformed into pasture and pleasure grounds, the formerly fruitful Campagna became a desert, the sturdy Roman country population disappeared, Rome lived on corn grown in Sicily and Egypt, the town was full of loafers unwilling to work, who lived on charity, work was done by foreigners, and the frontiers of the Empire were guarded by foreign mercenaries.[1] Tacitus tells us: 'Formerly Italy exported supplies for the legions to distant provinces, and even now Italy is not a barren country. But the people prefer cultivating Egypt and Africa, and the existence of the Roman people is entrusted to ships and to the dangers of the sea.'[2] It is not surprising that Rome, in spite of all her wealth, was periodically visited by famine, and that destitution was alarmingly prevalent in the largest and wealthiest city of the world. Quintilian complained in vain: 'Whilst we are selling to the neighbouring nations, urged on by the hope of ready gain, we have neglected all regard for public safety, and, having emptied our store abroad, have brought distress upon ourselves at home.'[3] Rome became dependent upon her wealth invested abroad. 'Rome is dependent upon the revenues of Asia. The public credit at Rome and the circulation of money in the forum is connected with it,' exclaimed Cicero.[4] Rome had become very wealthy. Her citizens were disinclined to work; the nation lived on its capital.

[1] *Vide* Columella, Varro, Gibbon, Mommsen.
[2] Tacitus, *Annals*, xii. 43.
[3] Quintilian, *Declamationes*, 12.
[4] Cicero, *Oratio pro Lege Manilia.*

In the year 123 B.C. Caius Gracchus had, by his Lex frumentaria, reduced the price of corn to about one-third the natural price, and at that reduced price it could be bought from the Government storehouses by the head of every family. Demagogues in power steadily reduced the price of grain until, in the year 58 B.C., gratis distributions of corn were introduced. Cæsar found that 320,000 people were in receipt of gratis corn. In the third century after Christ the distribution of corn was converted into a distribution of bread, which was followed by the gratuitous distribution of pork, oil, wine, salt. Rome was pauperised. The masses of the population would neither work for themselves nor fight for their country.[1] The army was recruited from the proletariat of the slums. Tiberius Gracchus exclaimed: 'The wild beasts of Italy have their dens, but our brave soldiers possess nothing except air and light. The defenders of their country have become tramps and beggars, and the masters of the universe have not a foot of ground they call their own.'[2] Not having sufficient strength to defend her capital, Rome easily fell before the onslaught of the barbarians.

The break-up of the Roman Empire transferred the centre of the world's power and of the world's wealth from Rome to Constantinople, which, partly owing to its incomparable position, partly owing to the fact that it became the political centre of the vast East Roman Empire, and that it swarmed with a huge population, obtained commercial supremacy among the nations. Constantinople became the great mart and exchange between Orient and Occident, between Asia and Europe. Unfortunately Constantinople aspired to become another Rome, and followed the example set her by Rome. Agriculture was allowed to decay, trade being more profitable, and Constantinople became a huge town peopled by pleasure-loving, idle consumers, who had to be clothed and fed by foreign nations. Egypt and the countries round the Black Sea grew corn for Constantinople, and the hosts of unemployed people in Constantinople as in Rome were a danger to the State and had to be supported by charity. *Panem et circenses* was the popular cry as much in Constantinople as it

[1] Naudé, *Getreidehandelspolitik*, 8, 12.*

[2] Plutarch, *Tiberius Gracchus*.

had been in Rome. The supply of cheap food was the constant preoccupation and the constant anxiety of every East Roman and West Roman statesman, for maritime nations brought Rome to the edge of starvation and rebellion by blockading the grain fleets. 'Alexandria was the key to Egypt, and by blocking up that plentiful corn country all Italy could very easily be reduced to starvation.'[1]

Constantinople for a long time lived in splendour on the huge accumulated capital of its citizens and on foreign tribute. As late as 1173, when the town was already declining, Benjamin of Tudela wrote in his Itinerary, 'Nowhere in the world except in Baghdad is so much wealth to be found as in Constantinople.' However, Constantinople was then no longer the centre of the world's power and trade. It was merely the centre of the world's consumption, and it lived on its old but shrinking wealth.

Constantinople relied for defence on mercenaries, the rabble of the slums and foreigners. When taken by the Turks in 1453 only two out of twelve commanders were natives.[2]

While the Eastern Roman Empire, though still strong, was gradually decaying, a new political power and a new commercial nation, the followers of Mahomet, the Arabs, had arisen. Within 150 years the Arabs conquered Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia, Persia, Egypt, the southern shore of the Mediterranean, and Spain. About the year 755, the Arabs dominated practically all the known parts of Asia and Africa, and as they were able merchants, the enormous trade of the huge conquered districts naturally fell into their hands. Arabian merchants traded from China to central and even to northern Europe. On the islands in the Baltic and on the coast of Sweden vast numbers of Arab coins are found.[3] Arabian sciences and Arabian arts flourished, and owing to their discoveries in geography, astronomy, philosophy, medicine, chemistry, navigation, architecture, &c., the Arabs became the pioneers of civilisation. Splendid monuments of the great Arab civilisation may still be seen throughout the world. The wonderful mosques at Delhi, Cairo, Constantinople, Seville and Cordova, of which some have been turned into churches, and

[1] Tacitus, *Annals*, book ii.
[2] Von Hammer, *Geschichte*, 1834, vol. ii. 412.
[3] J. Falke, *Geschichte des Deutschen Handels*, i. 48.

the celebrated Alhambra, still attest that the Arabs were as great artists as they were conquerors and merchants. The Arabs were the only men of letters during the early part of the Middle Ages, and the revival of learning during the Middle Ages is largely to be ascribed to Arabian influence. The words 'admiral,' 'frigate,' 'magazine,' 'tariff,' 'tare,' bazaar,' 'jewel,' 'arrack,' 'saffron,' and many more, which are of Arabian origin, are living monuments of the former power, culture and trading eminence of the Arabs. From 700 to 1200 the Arabs possessed the commercial supremacy of the world. Not competition but force created that supremacy and destroyed it. The Crusades and the wars of Spain against the Arabs, coinciding with internal dissensions and decay, destroyed the power of the Arab nation, and with its power fell its great trade.

The Crusades which destroyed the commercial supremacy of the Arabs gave rise to the commercial supremacy of the Italian coast towns. Venice, Genoa, Pisa, Amalfi, carried millions of pilgrims, their horses and their baggage, to and from the Holy Land, supplied them and the colonies they founded with provisions and materials, and they took the place of the Arabs in exchanging the products of Asia against the products of Europe, for the Italian trading towns which transported the Crusaders had made it a condition that they should be allowed to found trading establishments wherever the Crusaders went.[1] However, trade wars soon broke out between the Italian maritime towns.

In the ninth century Amalfi ruled the Mediterranean. Her coin circulated throughout the Orient. She was a celebrated seat of culture and learning, and a great centre of commerce. The Tabula Amalfitana, the sea laws of Amalfi of the year 1010, became the sea laws of the Mediterranean. Flavio Gioja of Amalfi introduced the mariner's compass. Amalfi was very prosperous, but her prosperity was shortlived. Pisa, her earliest competitor, jealous of Amalfi's trade, frequently made war upon that town. In 1135 Amalfi was sacked by the Pisans. Amalfi became a poor and miserable village, and Pisa the leading sea power.

Pisa's prosperity dates from her victory over the Arabs at Palermo in 1063, and her greatness was followed by decay when the fate of Amalfi overtook the Pisans. When she had destroyed

[1] Wilken, *Geschichte der Kreuzzüge*, vol. vii. 356.

Amalfi, Pisa's greatest competitor was Genoa. Competition between these two towns led to war, and after numerous campaigns the Pisan fleet was at last destroyed by the Genoese at the Island of Meloria in 1284, where 16,000 Pisans were killed or made prisoners.

From 1063 to 1284 Pisa was at the height of her power. During that period she ruled and colonised Corsica, Sardinia, and the Balearic Islands, and during the time of her splendour she built the magnificent Duomo, begun in 1063, the Battisterio, begun in 1153, and the Leaning Tower, begun in 1174, which are still objects of admiration. In the eleventh century Pisa had 150,000 inhabitants, in the seventeenth it had become a village.

After the destruction of Amalfi and Pisa, the remaining great sea towns of Italy, Genoa and Venice, fought each other for commercial supremacy. During three centuries Genoa and Venice were almost constantly at war, and at last Venice succeeded in defeating Genoa and in obtaining the undisputed supremacy in the Mediterranean. At the beginning of the fifteenth century Venice had a mercantile marine of 3,345 ships, manned by 43,000 seamen.[1] In 1318 we find the first Venetian ships visiting Antwerp, and in 1320 Venice began to send caravans into the interior of Africa. Having defeated her great competitors, Venice could with confidence embark on the greatest commercial ventures and she obtained the world's supremacy in trade and shipping. The produce of Asia and of Africa was carried overland to the Mediterranean, and thence carried to Italy by Venetian ships. From Italy Oriental produce was sent partly across the Alps and down the Rhine, towards the North Sea and the Baltic, partly it went there by sea by Gibraltar. The traffic between the north and the south of Europe created the wealth not only of Venice, Genoa, and Marseilles, which received the goods first hand, but also of numerous inland towns which lay in the stream of traffic and which profited by it, such as Florence, Milan, Verona, Lucca, Augsburg, Nuremberg, Strasburg, Cologne. Italy became the centre of wealth, culture, art, and learning, and the Italians of the fifteenth century looked with contempt upon all other nations and considered even the French to be barbarians.[2]

[1] Muratori, *Annali*, vol. vii. 114.

[2] Machiavelli, *Principe*, chap. xxvi.

If we now look back upon the history of trade and navigation we find that during more than 2,000 years international commerce had been chiefly occupied in carrying goods to and fro across the Mediterranean; for beyond the Mediterranean only barbarian nations were then to be found. However, the progress of culture in the countries of northern Europe caused, in the thirteenth century, new trade centres and a lively trade to spring up in England, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Russia; but as the merchants were attacked by crowned and uncrowned robbers and pirates, the merchant cities of Germany formed the Hanseatic League for the protection of this trade. That league soon became a great instrument of power, and it secured for the German coast towns commercial supremacy in the north of Europe. Force was used against all who opposed their trading monopoly. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the Hansa ruled the northern seas and the northern shores. However, lack of organisation and of unity, bad policy, the awakening and the strengthening of the northern Powers and disastrous wars with Norway and the Netherlands, already referred to in the preceding chapter, caused the decline of the Hanseatic League, and thus the people of Flanders, Brabant and the Dutch Netherlands became the chief traders in the north of Europe.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the art of navigation was so imperfect that a voyage from Italy to the Baltic and back again could not be performed in a single season. Hence, for the sake of their mutual convenience, the Italian and Hanseatic merchants determined upon establishing a depôt or storehouse for their respective products at some intermediate spot. Bruges was fixed upon for this purpose, and it seems to have owed that distinction largely to the liberty which the inhabitants enjoyed, to the liberality of the government of the Low Countries, and to the great convenience of its geographical situation. In consequence of this preference, Bruges steadily rose in importance, until it arrived at the very highest rank among commercial cities, and became a place of vast wealth. It was at once the storehouse for English wool, for the woollen and linen manufactures of the Netherlands, for the timber, hemp, flax, pitch, tar, tallow, corn, fish, ashes, &c., of the north, and for the spices, Indian commodities, and Italian manufactures, which

were imported by Italian merchants. The fairs of Bruges were the best frequented of any in Europe. The Hanseatic merchants were the principal purchasers of Italian commodities, which they sold in the ports of the Baltic, or which they carried up the great rivers into the heart of Germany.[1]

Manufactures of wool and flax had been established in Flanders and Brabant as early as the age of Charlemagne, and the towns around Bruges, such as Arras, Ypres, Mechlin, Ghent, had become the Lancashire of northern Europe. In Flanders and Brabant the wool of Spain and England was worked up into the finest and most costly cloths, a great industry had been established, and not only were the iron and coal deposits of the country exploited, but iron and copper were imported from Sweden, tin from England, and at Brussels, Liège, Mechlin, Namur, the finest metal goods and best swords and suits of armour were made.[2] Bruges was at the same time the industrial, commercial, and financial centre of that busy and exceedingly wealthy country. It had about 200,000 inhabitants, and was at that time larger and wealthier than London or Paris.

The great industrial and commercial towns of Brabant and Flanders, like Sidon, Tyre, Athens, Rhodes, Carthage, Rome, Constantinople, Amalfi, Pisa, Genoa, Venice, found trade and industry more profitable than agriculture, for all these had neglected the rural industries, and all these were nourished with foreign food. The great towns of Flanders and Brabant were fed with corn from the Baltic and from Germany. From the 'Libell of English Policye,' written in 1436, it appears that then these towns produced only bread enough to last for one month.

Commercial supremacy in northern Europe had passed from the great Hanseatic towns to Bruges. Lübeck, Hamburg, and Bremen seemed to be eclipsed for ever. Bruges, with its enormous wealth and power, occupied in the north of Europe a position similar to that occupied by Venice in the south. Venice and Bruges were the two points round which the commercial world revolved, and they seemed destined by nature to be, and for ever to remain, the commercial centres of the world. It will be

[1] William Robertson, *Charles V.*, note 30.

[2] Engelmann, *Geschichte des Handels*, 1881, 122.

shown in the following chaper how Venice and Bruges lost their supremacy.

The foregoing short sketch shows that from the earliest time of which we have knowledge, commercial and maritime supremacy has been gained by strenuous, hardworking and progressive nations of superior ability and superior culture, which occupied a central geographical position in the main route of international commerce, which were far ahead of other nations in energy, enterprise, and inventiveness, and which possessed a good government, good laws, and good institutions. Aristotle, for instance, praises the constitution of Carthage as the best constitution in the world,[1] and Isocrates also praises it highly,[2] in the same spirit in which Montesquieu and Rousseau, in the eighteenth century, praised the constitution of Great Britain as the masterpiece of human wisdom, and the cause of Great Britain's boundless prosperity and power. The foregoing sketch also shows that, although commercial and maritime supremacy can be gained by the ablest nation, provided it occupies a very favourable geographical position, such supremacy can be maintained only if the able, well-situated, and successful nation is at the same time strong enough to defend its commerce and wealth against all comers. Lastly, it shows that commercial supremacy may not only be gained by trade, but that it may also be conquered by war, and that it is more often acquired by brute force than by peaceful competition.

As the preservation of industrial and commercial pre-eminence largely depends upon armed strength, it is of the utmost importance that the inhabitants of a great commercial and industrial country should be brave and warlike; and nothing seems more fatal to commercial and maritime supremacy than the decay of agriculture, which inevitably creates a huge town proletariat, and brings about the weakening of the race. If statesmanlike considerations in the direction of a commercial commonwealth become subordinated to considerations of immediate cash profit; if a commercial State is directed not by statesmen but by successful tradesmen; if the policy of such a State is merely the policy of the shopkeeper, agriculture is liable to be neglected as it has been neglected by all great commercial nations of the past.

[1] Aristotle, *Politics*, ii. 9. [2] Isocrates, *Third Oration*

Commercial nations are apt to stake their very existence upon their foreign trade, a proceeding which is exceedingly dangerous, because foreign trade is far more vulnerable than are agriculture and the home trade. If Carthage and the other great commercial nations of the past had preserved their agriculture, they would have been able not only to raise a considerable army from their agricultural population—the town rabble is better at shouting than at fighting—but also to subsist on their agriculture and home trade, the trade between the agricultural and industrial sections of the community, when their foreign commerce was crippled in war. The exclusive fostering of the huge foreign trade, and of industries which manufactured chiefly for export, and which could be attacked on all seas, caused the decay of Phœnicia, Carthage, and other great commercial nations of the past. To them defeat meant annihilation. Phœnicia and Carthage erected the huge fabric of their State on a single pillar which, standing on foreign territory, could easily be sawn through from without.

The experience of thirty centuries shows that commercial and maritime supremacy depends at the same time, and almost to an equal extent, upon four factors—namely :—

(1) A good geographical position ;
(2) The industry and ability of the people ;
(3) Good government ;
(4) Military strength.

A great commercial nation is bound to decline if one of these four factors either disappears or is greatly weakened, and neither its actual commercial and maritime supremacy nor its glorious past, nor its vast accumulated wealth, can save it from decay. Nothing can save it. Venice and Bruges were to lose their supremacy and their wealth to Holland through the loss of one of those four factors which are the indispensable ingredients in creating and maintaining commercial and maritime eminence.

As long as the spices, drugs, and silks were carried overland to the southern shore of the Mediterranean, Venice maintained her commercial supremacy, but she lost that supremacy through the loss of her favoured geographical position. Since 1400 the Portuguese had endeavoured to reach India by sailing round the Cape of Good Hope. The invention of the mariner's compass

made that feat possible, for ships were no longer compelled to hug the circuitous African coast, but could, guided by the magnetic needle, reach the Cape in one-third of the former time by sailing straight across the Atlantic, passing by St. Helena. The discovery of the sea passage to India by Vasco da Gama in 1497–98 crippled the trade of Venice.

Since it was cheaper to transport the products of India by sea *via* the Cape of Good Hope than to send them overland, Vasco da Gama's discovery took away the favourable geographical position which not only Venice but all Italian towns had hitherto enjoyed. Italy lay no longer in the centre of the world's traffic, but was placed in a corner far away from the world's great trade route.

The discovery of the sea passage to India by the Portuguese, which was sung by Camoens as another Odyssey, turned the world's trade into a new channel. It made Lisbon the great mart where the goods of Orient and Occident were exchanged. Lisbon became the heir of Venice. Henceforth Venice had to rely for subsistence on its vast accumulated capital. She became an international money-lender, the banker of the world. However, Venice, like all other great commercial countries of the past, was to find out that no State can live on capital invested abroad, far from the effective control of the owners; that no nation can permanently live by other people's work.

The invention of the compass, which destroyed the greatness of Venice, opened a new world to the trade of the nations, and made the Spaniards and Portuguese masters of the New World. The wealth of Italy and of the New World fell into the lap of Spain and Portugal, from which countries it was to pass to the Netherlands and ultimately to England. England was to gain by conquest the commercial and maritime supremacy from the Netherlands, which the Netherlands had won by the sword from Spain and Portugal.

CHAPTER V

COMMERCIAL SUPREMACY BEGINS TO GRAVITATE TOWARDS THE NETHERLANDS AND THE NEW WORLD ARISES

'Commerce being destroyed in a country by its ruler or by a conqueror flies from oppression to countries where it finds peace. The former seats of commerce have become wastes and deserts, and former wastes and deserts have become busy centres of commerce.'—MONTESQUIEU, *Esprit des Lois*, xxi. 5.

'Many desire one and the same thing at once, which frequently they neither can nor will enjoy in common nor yet divide. Hence it follows that the desired objects must be given to the stronger, and who is the stronger can be known only by fighting.—THOMAS HOBBES, *De Corpore Politico*, i. 5.

THE House of Hapsburg has acquired its huge territories in a manner which is unique in history. Its multifarious possessions have been acquired not by the sword but by marriage. The witty distich, 'Bella gerant alii! Tu, felix Austria, nube, Nam quæ Mars aliis dat tibi regna Venus' (Let others make war. Thou, happy Austria, marry, for Venus gives thee those realms which on others Mars bestows), which is ascribed to King Mathias Corvinus, happily sums up the history of the Hapsburgs and the genesis of the present State of Austria-Hungary.

In 1447 Maximilian of Austria, the German Emperor's son and heir, married Maria, the daughter and heiress of Charles the Bold, the last Burgundian ruler of the Netherlands, who, as we have seen in Chapter III.,[1] was killed in battle, and thus the sovereignty of the Low Countries—that is, of the present kingdoms of Belgium and Holland—passed like a dowry from the House of Burgundy to that of Hapsburg. Maximilian's son, Philip the Fair, Duke of Burgundy, married Joanna, the heiress of the Spanish Crown, but he died at a very early age. Thus

[1] See page 39.

it came about that his son, Charles V., the grandson of Maximilian I. of Austria, inherited, through the judicious and fortunate marriages of his parents and grandparents, the rule over half the world; for not only the German Empire, Spain, the greater part of Italy and the Netherlands, but the New World, also came under his sway.

Maximilian of Hapsburg and his great successor, Charles V., were exceedingly ambitious and warlike rulers. Both drew from the great industrial and commercial towns of Flanders and Brabant crushing contributions for their extensive and costly wars.

Maximilian almost ruined the great towns of Flanders and Brabant during his rule from 1477 to 1519. He impoverished the Dutch and Belgian Netherlands not only by high taxation but also by tampering with the currency. He added insult to injury by disregarding the rights and privileges of the individual provinces and cities laid down in the Netherlands Charter, the 'Great Privilege,' of which details have been given in Chapter III.

Maximilian's successor, the great Emperor Charles V., also exploited the Dutch and Belgian Netherlands by the taxes which he imposed, but he endeavoured to win the esteem of the citizens. He saved appearances by respecting their guaranteed rights, and strove to strengthen their sense of national cohesion and their national organisation. Charles V. wished to convert the countless independent political and administrative units, which form at present the kingdoms of Holland and Belgium, into a firmly united homogeneous State, but he failed in his attempts. The great diversity of the laws and of the ancient privileges and customs which prevailed in the various parts of the country made an organic union impossible without tearing up all the ancient local charters. The mutual jealousies between all the individual units and their sense of independence were so strong that none would lend itself to an amalgamation with its neighbours. Charles V. succeeded only in introducing a loose outward union among the seventeen provinces.[1]

The militant individualism of the Dutch was not restricted to

[1] Strada, *De Bello Belgico*, i.**; Pufendorf, *Histoire Générale*, 1721 vol. iv. 87.

political matters. Both Maximilian and Charles V. endeavoured to introduce some order into the chaotic commercial and maritime affairs of the Netherlands, which suffered greatly from the lack of national organisation and consequent disorder. The defence of Dutch trade against hostile attacks on the sea was left to the initiative of individual towns. Privateering was common, and privateering, unless controlled and regulated by the State, is certain to degenerate into piracy, and is a danger to any State which allows its citizens to act as pirates.

Therefore, Maximilian tried to create order on the sea by means of a national admiralty. According to Maximilian's proposal, an admiral was to be appointed who was 'to supervise the conduct of ships on the seas and administer justice in the Emperor's name, in accordance with the resolutions of the Grand Council. The admiral was to be the Emperor's representative, and through him, or through his lieutenants, all differences on the sea were in future to be examined and adjusted, and punishments were to be inflicted upon all transgressors of the maritime laws without delay. Nobody was to be allowed to fit out privateers except by permission of the admiral or his lieutenant, who was to see that officially recognised privateers were well found, well equipped, and well armed. If the equipment was insufficient, the admiral was to provide at a reasonable price all that was necessary. All ships owing obedience to the Emperor were to carry the flag of the admiral, &c. &c.' [1]

The foregoing extract shows that Maximilian wished to give to the Dutch a national merchant marine protected by a national navy, which was to police and control the sea in the interest of the Netherlands. However, this plan could not be carried out, although it was obviously beneficial to the maritime industries of the Dutch, because the province of Holland refused to submit to the jurisdiction of an admiral acting on behalf of the whole of the Netherlands. The province of Holland claimed that 'from time immemorial the towns of Holland had been entitled to know, and had known, how to conduct their maritime affairs. Consequently they were themselves the best judges in maritime matters, and supervision, if any, should be exercised not by a national authority but by a provincial one.' [2] In other words,

[1] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 81.* [2] *Ibid.* 93.*

the province of Holland meant to look after her own interests without regard to the interests of the other provinces.

Maximilian's proposal was never adopted, owing to the opposition of the province of Holland. A similar edict which was issued by Charles V. in 1540 was also disregarded, and maritime matters were allowed to remain in the old chaotic state.[1] There was evidently too much individualism, jealousy, and mutual suspicion in the Netherlands; otherwise the Dutch towns would have agreed to create a central and national authority in maritime matters, for through such an authority countless disputes, much loss of money and much bloodshed would have been avoided and the security of the seas would have been greatly increased to the benefit of all Dutch traders.

When the great towns of Flanders and Brabant felt that they were taxed almost out of existence by the crushing and illegal exactions of Maximilian and Charles V., they complained and protested, they appealed to their charters and their privileges, but their representations proved unavailing. At last they rebelled, but they were easily crushed and reduced to obedience, because they were disunited and had become unmilitary.

The wealthy and powerful towns of Flanders and Brabant were stifled by their enormous wealth. Defeated in war, weighed down by taxation, and despoiled by the alteration in the currency already alluded to, the great industrial and commercial towns of Flanders and Brabant, among which Bruges and Ghent were foremost, began to decline and to decay. Bruges, with its 200,000 inhabitants, was, perhaps, then proportionately as populous and as important a city as London is at the present time, and Ghent had such mighty manufactures that she employed, according to Comines, 50,000 workers in her woollen manufactures; but the greatness of these towns did not prevent their downfall; on the contrary, it made their suffering all the more terrible. Bruges and Ghent experienced the same fate which had befallen Ypres a century before.[2] The great manufacturers and their workers, finding it impossible to make a living in Flanders and Brabant, began to leave those provinces. The great international traders who had made Bruges the storehouse, mart, and banking centre

[1] Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book xviii. chap. xix.*

[2] See page 29.

of northern Europe also emigrated. Most of these went to Antwerp, and Antwerp became the greatest international trading centre in northern Europe and the storehouse of the northern world.[1]

Commercial supremacy left Bruges as it had left her great predecessors. For a limited time Antwerp was to enjoy the uncertain and delusive blessing of commercial supremacy, but soon commercial supremacy was again to remove its seat and to settle in Amsterdam.

The armed resistance which Bruges and Ghent had opposed to Maximilian and Charles V. had been easily broken owing to the aid given to the emperors by the less prosperous towns and provinces of the Netherlands. These gladly assisted in the downfall of the great and flourishing towns, which they hated for their wealth. Had the whole, or at least a large part, of the Netherlands stood by the great towns of Flanders and Brabant, the peace and prosperity of the whole country would undoubtedly have been preserved.

Unfortunately then, as in later years, the huckstering spirit of petty traders, petty jealousies, and local selfishness—miscalled local patriotism—opposed the national idea, deadened the national sense, and even the sense of common justice and humanity in the Netherlands, and made united action impossible. The same spirit which opposed the creation of a national admiralty opposed national union against the common oppressor.

While the Netherlands were being ground down by Maximilian and Charles V., and while the centres of resistance—the large towns—were being attacked singly and crushed, the petty squabbles among the individual provinces and towns and between the two parties in the various towns of the Dutch Netherlands continued. The aristocratic and burgher factions fought and exterminated one another. Numerous local riots and risings occurred, province fought against province, town against town, village against village, party against party, confusion and bloodshed were general. Individualism unrestrained had brought about a war of all against all.

[1] A. Anderson, *History of Commerce*, 1764, vol. i. 303.

By making skilful use of their differences, Maximilian had prevented the Netherlands from combining against him. It was his general policy to support the party of parochialism, of disintegration and of disunion, the burgher party, against the aristocratic party, which was the unifying and national element, and therefore dangerous to him. During his rule, the aristocratic party—the Hoeks—were destroyed, and the small political communities of the Netherlands were given supremacy not only in local matters but in national matters as well. The Emperor introduced Home Rule all round; local self-government was *in excelsis*. The Netherlands were broken up into fragments, every fragment was a State within the State, the national cohesion and national power of the Netherlands were shattered.

While the Netherlands were crumbling to pieces through the action of that powerful corrosive which is called individualism, and which is only a scientific word for selfishness, a new world had arisen. In 1516 Luther had begun his attack on the Roman Catholic Church, and in a few decades Protestantism had gained millions of adherents among the most intelligent and the most industrious classes of Europe.

When the Roman Catholic Church found her supremacy threatened, she resolved to enter upon a campaign of repression, and a wave of persecution, started by the Council of Trent, swept between 1550 and 1560 over the unhappy followers of the new doctrines. In Germany Charles V., in France Henry II., in England Queen Mary, raged simultaneously with fire and sword, with rope and rack, against the Protestants. 'These persecutions,' wrote Huet, Bishop of Avranches, 'forced a world of people, as well as trade, from Germany, France, and England, and greatly increased the trade of Antwerp. The vast concourse of all the principal trading nations made this town the most celebrated storehouse or magazine in all Europe, if not in the whole world. About the year 1550 it was a common thing to see 2,500 ships in the Scheldt laden with all sorts of merchandise.'[1] The Venetian ambassador Cavalli was similarly impressed by the prosperity of Antwerp, for he reported to his Government, in 1551: 'Antwerp has from 70,000 to 80,000

[1] Huet, *A View of the Dutch Trade*, 1722.

inhabitants. There is no town which is wealthier in merchandise. One might say that the trade of the Universe is centred in it. It outshines even Venice.' [1]

The foregoing quotations make it clear that Antwerp owed its rapid rise to commercial pre-eminence to the decay of Bruges and Ghent, and to the religious persecutions which took place in Germany, France and England. They show that commercial nations and commercial towns may arrive at greatness through the mistakes and misfortunes of their national competitors. After all, maritime and commercial supremacy is created quite as often by chance as by merit, and perhaps more often by war than by work.

The persecution of the Protestants spread from the surrounding countries to the Netherlands themselves. The Inquisition was established in the Netherlands in 1550; [2] and during the rule of Charles V., 50,000 victims were sacrificed to the Moloch of intolerance, according to Meteren. Grotius places the number of victims even as high as 100,000.[3] Blind tyranny, which had driven the trade of Flanders into Antwerp, was later on to drive it from Antwerp to Amsterdam, and then to throw also the immense wealth of both Indies at the feet of the Netherlands, as we shall see in due course.

Maximilian and Charles V. ruled the Netherlands from 1477 to 1555. While during that time irreparable harm was done to the commerce and industries of Flanders and Brabant, the Dutch Netherlands prospered, notwithstanding their heavy taxation, their civil dissensions, their lack of national organisation and the prevalence of war. Their most important industry, fishing, was not in any way affected by the war, and their almost equally important industry, the carrying trade, suffered little. On balance, their merchant marine benefitted by the war, for the Dutch merchants obtained higher freights and larger profits during those troubled times.

War is often exceedingly profitable to the merchant marine of neutral States, and to those belligerent States which are possessed of a strong navy. Relying on their great naval

[1] Alberi, *Relazione degli Ambasciatori Veneti.***

[2] Brandt, *History of the Reformation*, 1720, vol. i. 88.**

[3] Grotius, *Annales*, 1657, i. 12.**

strength, the Dutch were able to ruin or crush their competitors in troubled times. Hence, the Dutch of the sixteenth century, as the English of the eighteenth century, rather wished for war than feared it.

An encounter which took place in 1555 well illustrates the spirit of the Dutch seamen. Twenty-two Dutch merchant ships homeward bound from Spain, and freighted with Indian spices, were attacked by twenty-five well-armed French ships of war, which stopped the Hollanders' ships with hooks and chains. The ships being closely packed together, a fight took place which resembled a fight on dry land. During the combat, which lasted six hours, the French lost 1,000 men, and the Dutch but 300. The savage courage of the Dutch sailors made their attacks irresistible.[1]

During the rule of Maximilian and Charles V., the maritime importance of the Netherlands, and especially that of the province of Holland, greatly increased. Thanks to the decay of Bruges, Amsterdam had become a most flourishing port and the principal town in the province of Holland. Guicciardini mentions that the trade which Amsterdam carried on with Poland, Denmark, Prussia, &c. before the revolt of the Netherlands against Spain, was so great that 'fleets of 300 ships arrived at Amsterdam twice a year from Dantzic and Livonia alone.'[2] Henceforth the province of Holland devoted the greatest energy to the extension of her foreign trade, upon which she became almost completely dependent; for the marshy territory of Holland was quite unable to nourish the numerous inhabitants, especially as, since the decline of Bruges and Ghent, the population of Holland had greatly increased through an immense influx of refugees.

An excellent picture of the state and trade of the province of Holland at that period is supplied by a remonstrance which the States of Holland addressed to Charles V. in which they declared: 'The Province of Holland is a very small land, small in length, and still smaller in width, situated so to say with three sides in the sea, and compelled to protect itself with dykes against the ocean. These dykes must be maintained at a great and

[1] Meteren, *Histoire des Pays-Bas*, 1618, 17.**

[2] McCulloch, *Treatises and Essays*, 1859, 350.

continuous expense; and not only dykes, but sluices, pump-works and canals also have to be kept up. Besides, the province possesses many large swamps and lakes which grow from day to day, and many other barren lands where one can neither sow nor reap. These circumstances force the inhabitants to earn their living for themselves, their wives, their children and their families, by handicraft and commerce. They are forced to seek abroad their raw materials and to resell to foreign countries those raw materials in the shape of manufactured articles; for instance, cloth and draperies, which are bought in many countries, such as Spain, Portugal, Germany and Scotland, and particularly in Denmark, Norway, and other northern countries. From these countries we take in exchange their productions, especially a large quantity of wheat and other grains. For these reasons, the chief occupation of Holland consists in plying her shipping, which nourishes a large number of people who make a living as merchants, sailors, boatmen, pilots, shipwrights, &c., and who constantly carry hither and thither merchandise of every kind.' [1]

The province of Holland, like another Liverpool, was chiefly interested in shipping and commerce. Large rivers separated it from the mainland, and made its situation almost insular, and, by opening the sluices, Holland could be converted into an island. Therefore that province considered herself not as an integral part of the Netherlands, but as a country by itself; exactly as some Englishmen are apt to forget that England is not a country by itself, but a part of the British Empire. Owing to her almost insular position, the province of Holland thought herself unassailable by land, and she felt strong enough to defend her water-girt territory single-handed. Therefore she endeavoured to keep aloof from the affairs of the Netherlands, and considered the other provinces almost as a foreign country with which 'entanglements' ought to be avoided. The insularity which clearly speaks out of the foregoing document, and out of the opposition of the province of Holland to the creation of a national admiralty,[2] is characteristic and interesting. We shall meet with the stiff-necked insularity and fatal self-confidence of the inhabitants of the province of Holland throughout this history, and we shall see

[1] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 23.*

[2] See page 62.

that that insularity and self-confidence greatly contributed to the decline of the Netherlands.

The period from 1477 to 1555, during which Maximilian and Charles V. ruled the Netherlands, is one of the greatest and one of the most interesting periods in the world's history, for during that short period the world made perhaps greater progress towards enlightenment and civilisation than it had done during the thousand years preceding it. While the Emperors Maximilian and Charles V. strove by unceasing wars to increase their power and to enlarge their vast dominions, a new intellectual and a new material world arose. Almost simultaneously, Erasmus, Luther, Melanchthon, Zwingli, Calvin, Farel, Savonarola, Knox and Cranmer came forth, broke the shackles with which throughout the Middle Ages the Roman Catholic Church, aided by feudal tyranny, had fettered the intelligence and the will of mankind, and proclaimed to all civilised nations the gospel of freedom of conscience, of freedom of thought and of civil liberty. During the reign of Maximilian and Charles V. the darkness of the Middle Ages came to an end, the spell which priests and princes had thrown over the nations was broken, the dawn of modern civilisation arose. Having burst the bonds of theological and political absolutism which had confined it for a thousand years, human intelligence triumphantly soared aloft. Leonardo da Vinci, Michel Angelo, Botticelli, Raphael, Correggio, Titian, Veronese, Holbein, Dürer, Ariosto, Camoens, Bramante, Cellini, Palestrina, and many others heralded the dawn of the new era and created modern art; Copernicus, modern astronomy; Martin Behaim and Mercator, modern geography; Holinshed, Comines, and Guicciardini, modern history; Paracelsus, modern chemistry; Machiavelli, modern political science; Luther, the German language, and Montaigne, modern French. During the time of the Renaissance the world was truly re-born.

The physical horizon of mankind also was mightily enlarged. The introduction of the mariner's compass had changed the aspect of the world. The slender magnetic needle had been the master-key which had opened to Europe a new world peopled with strange human beings and possessed of unfathomable wealth. The imagination and cupidity of nations were excited to the utmost by vistas of boundless territorial possessions and

of equally boundless wealth. An irresistible movement towards extra-European expansion set in among the nations of Europe.

Up to the beginning of the fifteenth century geography had been the most neglected of all sciences. In the time of Prince Henry the Navigator, Ptolemy was the highest authority in geography, although his works were then almost fourteen hundred years old,[1] but geography soon assumed an importance similar to that which is held now by chemistry and electricity, and explorers came forth by the dozen. In 1486 Bartolomeo Diaz discovered the Cape of Good Hope; in 1492 Columbus discovered America.

During the Crusades the doctrine that they had the right to invade, ravage and seize the territories of all infidel nations had been established among the Christian princes.[2] Was it not written in the Bible, 'I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel'?[3] Hence, the supreme lord of the world, Pope Alexander VI., the terrible Borgia, the father of the infamous Cesare Borgia, by his celebrated Bull of May 3, 1493, divided the whole New World, discovered and to be discovered, between Spain and Portugal, by drawing a line of demarcation across the globe from the north pole to the south pole, a hundred leagues to the west of the Azores.

Discoveries now followed each other in rapid succession. In 1497 the Cabots, Italians who had settled in England and anglicised their name, discovered Newfoundland, and the mainland of America, and in the same year the Cape of Good Hope was doubled by Vasco da Gama and the way to India opened. In 1500 Brazil was discovered by Pinzon; in 1506 Madagascar was reached by Almeida. Soon Mexico and Peru, countries overflowing with gold and silver, the precious Spice Islands, the marvellous Pearl Islands, and India, China and Japan, were freely to yield their boundless riches to Spaniards and Portuguese. All the mysterious and almost mythical countries of the gorgeous East from Ophir to Cathay, and all the strange and boundless seas filled with islands abounding in gold, precious stones and spices, were to give up their vast treasures to the Spanish, for it

[1] Washington Irving, *Columbus*, book i. chap. iii.
[2] *Ibid.* book v. chap. viii.
[3] Psalm ii.

seemed certain that little Portugal and all her colonial possessions would soon fall into the hands of mighty Spain. Year after year new discoveries, one more marvellous than the other, were announced, year after year fresh sources of vast and ever vaster wealth and power were tapped. Spain seemed to be destined to possess and to rule both the New World and the Old and the wealth of the New World was to maintain her armies with which the Old World was to be subdued. 'The gold and silver wherewith the New World furnished Spain contributed most to make Charles V. so powerful and enabled him to aspire to universal monarchy.'[1]

Charles V. was born in 1500, when the New World had already been divided by the Pope between Spain and Portugal. When he arrived at man's estate, he found himself not only master of Spain, Germany, Austria, the larger part of Italy and of the Dutch and Belgian Netherlands, but also of limitless continents possessed of unfathomed wealth in the New World. It cannot be wondered at that he thought universal monarchy was in his grasp; that France found it necessary to ally herself with the dreaded and despised infidels to resist the Emperor's power; that the might of Spain seemed at one time to all Europe as irresistible as her wealth seemed inexhaustible, and that their prosperity intoxicated the Spaniards and filled them with an immeasurable pride and with an equally immeasurable contempt for all other nations.

The policy of spoliation and of massacre which, in accordance with the Biblical commands, Spain had so successfully pursued in the New World through Cortez and Pizarro, had caused her to adopt a similar policy in Europe. The Moorish and Jewish subjects of the King of Spain and those Christians who had embraced the Reformation were to be converted or exterminated, so that a purely Spanish race, bound together by the Orthodox Roman Catholic faith, should, with the help of the Pope, rule the universe. It was true that the Moors, Jews and Protestants were the most industrious subjects of Charles V. and that the loss of these men would mean the destruction of the manufacturing industries which had made Spain, Flanders and Brabant prosperous. However, the industrial wealth which was

[1] Rapin, *History of England*, 1732, vol. i. 742.

produced by the Protestants of the Netherlands and by the Moors, who were the best artisans in Spain, seemed but a trifle when compared with the inexhaustible treasures which the New World yielded and was going to yield to Spain. According to a Spanish economist, America sent to Spain in the course of two centuries gold and silver to the value of more than £1,200,000,000.[1] In 1545 the incredibly rich mines of Potosi in Bolivia and in 1548 those of Zacatecas in Mexico were discovered. The silver fleet conveyed Spain's most precious harvest, and Spanish merchants and manufacturers deserted their factories and offices in order to dig for gold and silver in other continents. Spain, like Rome, began to rely on wealth produced in her outlying possessions.

The vast prosperity which unexpectedly had burst over their country, and the vision of the dominion of the world, turned the heads of the rulers of Spain, who began to squander the wealth of the mother country and of the colonies in every direction. Intoxicated by the greatness and the wealth of her dominions and her apparently irresistible power, Spain madly rushed into a career of tyranny, terrorism, and bloodshed which struck all Europe with awe; and she might have succeeded in enslaving the world, destroying freedom of conscience and of thought, and in erecting a gigantic Spanish world-empire on the ruins of the States of Europe and of the new civilisation, had not the Netherlands saved the world from the Spanish yoke.

If we allow for the state of intoxication which events had created in the rulers of Spain, we can understand that they looked upon the great Protestant reformers with contempt. Rome and Spain were allies, both were at the zenith of their power, and resistance against their combined might by a handful of clamorous theologians and revolted ecclesiastics seemed ludicrous. The Spaniards mistook the rising tide of the Reformation for an ordinary rebellion, and endeavoured to crush the agitators and their followers by ordinary means.

'That is a bad kind of wealth which is created by accident, not by the industry of a nation.'[2] Easily won, easily gone, applies with equal force to private and to national wealth. National wealth and power will not be lasting if they have

[1] Ustariz, *Theory and Practice of Commerce*, 1751.

[2] Montesquieu, *Esprit des Lois*, xxi. 22.

been acquired by good fortune or by accident, for wealth and power easily won will be frivolously squandered. Only those nations which by the earnest, patient toil of many generations have slowly arrived at prosperity hold their possessions dearly, preserve them wisely, and defend them vigorously. Great oaks grow slowly. Empires which have shot up like mushrooms overnight have vanished overnight. The empires of Alexander the Great, Charlemagne, Genghis Khan, Charles V., Napoleon, were but for a day. Likewise the vast wealth which fortune threw into the lap of Constantinople, Baghdad, Alexandria, Venice, Bruges, and the gigantic colonial empires which Carthage, Venice, Spain, and the Netherlands won in a generation or two have disappeared. *Sic transit gloria mundi.*

Through their discoveries and the gift of the Pope, Spain and Portugal had gained, not only the whole territory of the New World, but also supremacy in the most profitable branch of the world's trade. Lisbon and the great Spanish seaports Seville and Cadiz became the ports of arrival for the produce of Asia, Africa, and America. Venice, the other Mediterranean ports, and the Italian inland towns, now lay far away from the great trade route between Europe and the countries beyond the Mediterranean, and they rapidly decayed. Venice made a last effort at regaining her great trade, if not with the Orient, at least with the produce of the Orient, by proposing to the Portuguese government to buy all the spices imported by the Portuguese for foreign consumption at a fixed price in Lisbon, but that offer was rejected.[1] Henceforth Venice was to live on her accumulated capital and to decline.

Spain and Portugal had won their enormous colonies by the right of discovery and of first occupation, but national possessions, in whatever way they are gained, can be retained only by power; for between nation and nation might is right, and those rights which are not defended by might are apt to be disregarded by a stronger nation. Might has ruled international relations since the dawn of history when nations were formed, and might will probably for a long time, perhaps to the end of time, continue to decide all important international differences.

Many attempts at international arbitration have been made

[1] Daru, *Histoire de Venise*, book xix.

during more than 2,000 years from the time when the ancient Greeks formed the Amphictyonic Council as a high court of nations to the establishment of the Hague Tribunal, but unfortunately the Hague Tribunal and its numerous predecessors have proved as ineffective in preventing wars as was the Amphictyonic Council in preventing the extermination of Greeks by Greeks, and the cause of their failure is obvious. Every vigorous State pursues two principal aims: to enlarge its dominions and to preserve its independence. Every healthy nation, like every healthy tree, endeavours to grow and to increase. Besides, neither right nor chance but the instinct, and before all the desire, of expansion, supported by might, have created nations out of tribes and evolved empires out of nations. By the right of the stronger a little tribe of Northmen possessed itself of England, and by the right of the stronger England acquired her enormous empire. By the right of the stronger the Hohenzollerns, a poor Swabian family who came to the wilds of Prussia with a handful of retainers a few centuries ago, created modern Germany. Russia, Austria-Hungary, France, Switzerland, Holland, the United States, in fact all States, were created by might, not by right. To might all States owe the title of their possessions, and only by might can these be retained.

Might being the foundation of every State and practically the sole title to its possessions, no powerful nation is willing to stake its possessions, which were won by force, upon the hazard of a judicial decision, especially as the law is proverbially uncertain and unsatisfactory. Therefore every great nation relies upon its armed strength for the defence, not of its 'rights' which are disputable, but of its 'interests,' of which every nation claims to be the sole competent judge. Only trifling questions have so far been submitted by nations to the decision of foreign arbitrators, and it seems unlikely that any great nation would leave the adjustment of her vital interests to outsiders, who can only be expected to weigh legal 'rights,' but who cannot be expected sympathetically to weigh national aspirations, pretensions, and claims to expansion, to supremacy, and to dominion. Prince Bismarck said on this subject: 'It is true that great armies are a great burden. By our armaments we

conduct a kind of warfare with other nations in which we give blows to one another with our money-bags. Armed peace may be ruinous, but disarmament is a chimera, for who will enforce an unpalatable decision upon a strong nation unwilling to submit to it? To make international decisions enforceable by third parties would mean to make the *casus belli* permanent among nations.'[1]

The leading German authority on political theory agrees with the leading German authority on practical statesmanship, for Professor von Treitschke wrote: 'The institution of a permanent international court of arbitration is incompatible with the very nature of the State, for a State can only by its own will set limits to itself. Only questions of secondary or tertiary importance can be submitted to arbitration, for in matters of vital national importance an impartial referee does not exist. Besides, it is a matter of national honour that a nation should settle her difficulties without foreign interference. An authoritative tribunal of nations is impossible. To the end of history national arms will preserve their rights, and herein lies the sacredness of war.'[2] In another place von Treitschke wrote: 'Wars will never be abolished by international courts of arbitration, for in judging of the vital questions between two States, other States cannot be impartial. In the society of nations the interests of every nation are so interwoven with the interests of every other nation that impartiality cannot be reckoned on.'[3]

It may be immoral, in fact it is immoral, but in international affairs might is right. The Spaniards were to find out that the right of discovery and of first occupation is good, but that the right of the stronger is better. By the right of the stronger, called in diplomatic language 'first occupation,' the Spanish had robbed the natives of their land and of their wealth. By the right of the stronger the Dutch took these lands from the Spanish and enjoyed them until, by the right of the stronger, England took them from the Dutch. Perhaps the day may come when by the right of the stronger some Power or some Powers will despoil Great Britain of her colonies, for nothing is permanent in this world and no arbitration treaties and no

[1] *Poschinger Tischgespräche*, vol. i. 20.
[2] Treitschke, *Politik*, vol. i. 38. [3] *Ibid.* vol. ii. 553.

international high court of nations will defend the territories of the British Empire if the Empire itself is no longer strong enough to defend them. The law of the stronger is the law of nature. It applies to the whole vegetable and animal creation and it rules the world. Life is war. Peace Conferences may achieve much, but they cannot abolish the laws of nature, and as Providence has created this universal law, we deny the wisdom of creation and of the Creator if we say that wars are ungodly or unchristian.

CHAPTER VI

THE NETHERLANDS ARE DEVASTATED BY SPAIN AND THE DUTCH REPUBLIC IS CREATED WITH BLOOD AND IRON

'Two things are destructive both of government and religion—a passionate prince and an ignorant priest.'—SADI, *Rosarium Politicum* (Gulistan), viii. 19.

'Great national problems are solved not by speeches and resolutions of majorities, but by blood and iron.—BISMARCK, Speech, September 30, 1862.

'No State was ever born with stronger thews or nursed up with harder fare, or inured to greater labours or dangers in the whole course of its youth than were the Netherlands, which are circumstances that usually make strong and healthy bodies.'—SIR WILLIAM TEMPLE, *Observations on the United Netherlands*, chap. i.

ON October 25, 1555, one of the most dramatic spectacles in the world's history took place in the town of Brussels. Leaning heavily for support, with one hand on a crutch, and with the other on the shoulder of his young and trusted friend, William, Prince of Orange, the Emperor Charles V., the mightiest monarch of Christendom, stood before a magnificent assembly of princes, grandees, and noblemen, and of burghers of the Netherlands, and gave to them an account of his lengthy and glorious rule. Then he declared that he felt too old and too infirm to defend the State and the Faith any longer with the necessary vigour. Therefore, he had resolved upon resigning his power to his beloved son Philip, for the good of his subjects, and he begged all his subjects to forgive him if he had unwittingly injured them or done them any injustice during his reign. Contemporaneous historians tell us that no eye was dry when this moving scene took place. The Emperor himself wept profusely at his self-humiliation and magnanimity.[1]

[1] Pontus Henterus, *Rerum Austriacarum*, book xiv. 668**; Strada, *de Bello Belgico*, i. 5**; Robertson, *Charles V.*, book xi.

Charles V. had been born and bred in the Netherlands. His Netherlandish manners and his Netherlandish counsellors were disliked in Spain, which was the centre of his enormous world-empire. The Spaniards saw in Charles V. a foreigner and disliked him. Desiring that his son should find in Spain that cordial support which he himself had failed to obtain, Charles V. had caused Philip to be brought up in a manner calculated to make him a Spaniard among the Spaniards. Having always been surrounded by the proudest of Spanish noblemen, and having been educated by the most zealous Roman Catholic priests, Philip had become haughty, narrow-minded, morose, unapproachable, bigoted, fanatic, a true pupil of Torquemada and Loyola. Philip spoke only Spanish. His appearance, manners, and spirit, which proclaimed him a proud Castilian and a perfervid supporter of the Roman Catholic Church, stood him in good stead with his Spanish subjects, but his narrow-mindedness and repelling manners made him disliked in all other countries.

Charles V. had striven mightily after universal monarchy, and he had ardently wished that his son should carry out his world-embracing plans and become the ruler of the Universe. All the great States of Europe, with the exception of France and England, seemed to be in Philip's grasp. Of these two States, England was considered to be the more dangerous opponent to Spain's world-wide ambitions. Therefore, England was, in the traditional manner of the Hapsburgs, 'by marriage,' to be added to their enormous dominions. With this object in view, Charles V. had persuaded Queen Mary of England, his bigoted Roman Catholic niece, known to history under the name of 'Bloody Mary,' to marry Philip, pointing out to her that such a union would greatly assist in restoring the true religion and in extirpating Protestantism in England.[1] The proposal of Charles V. was accepted, and in 1554 Philip, who was then twenty-seven years old, married Queen Mary, who was by eleven years his senior.

Notwithstanding the great disproportion of their ages, the English Queen had married Philip gladly, for she had experienced already nine or ten, if not more, matrimonial disappoint-

[1] Robertson, *Charles V.*, chap. xi.

ments.[1] She was an unhealthy, wizened, ugly woman, repulsive to Philip in body and in mind, and he had married her only in the hope of having children by her, and through his offspring joining England to the monarchy of Spain;[2] but, when he found that Mary was destined to remain childless, he left her. Fortunately for England, Queen Mary died in 1558. Protestant Elizabeth came to the throne, and England seemed to be lost to Spain and to Roman Catholicism. Philip's ambassador was instructed to congratulate Elizabeth on her accession and to propose to her that she should marry Philip under a special dispensation of the Pope. However, although Philip was, no doubt, in every respect the most eligible prince of the time, Elizabeth refused the tempting offer.[3] Thus, owing to the barrenness of one queen and to the sense of duty, or to the disinclination, of another, the plan of Charles V. to incorporate England with the gigantic Spanish world-empire came to naught. Had Queen Mary not been childless, the world might have become Spanish and Roman Catholic instead of Anglo-Saxon and Protestant. Chance is evidently one of the greatest makers of history, and the greatest historical events spring often from trifling causes.

Her great successes in Europe had made Spain a most powerful country, and Philip II. ruled not only Spain but the Franche-Comté, the larger part of Italy and the Dutch and Belgian Netherlands as well. The Pope was his ally, and the mighty Roman Catholic Church, which then was a 'church militant' in the fullest sense of the word, fought on the side of the Spaniards. The wealthiest countries in Europe owed obedience to the Spanish crown, and the inexhaustible wealth of both Indies, of Mexico and of Peru were at Spain's disposal. The Spanish troops and the Spanish generals were considered to be by far the best in the world. All States endeavoured to model their armies on those of Spain.[4] According to the reports of the Venetian ambassadors, Spain had not only the largest army but also the strongest fleet.[5] Philip II. ruled over twenty million

[1] Strype, *Memorials*, iii. 129.
[2] Rapin, *History of England*, 1732, ii. 43.
[3] Robertson, *Charles V.*, chap. xii.
[4] Brix, *Geschichte der Spanischen Armee*, 1881.
[5] Alberi, *Relazione degli Ambasciatori Veneti.***

people, France had a population of ten million people, England of only five million people.[1] Therefore, the will of Philip could direct the greatest countries, the strongest armies, the greatest wealth and the most powerful ecclesiastical organisation in the world, and Philip's will was bent upon crushing Protestantism and establishing a universal monarchy.

Philip II. has left us numerous declarations of his policy. The phrase contained in one of his letters: 'It is much better that a kingdom should go to ruin remaining faithful to God and the King than that it should remain whole in the hands of heretics and sectarians to the joy of the devil'[2] sums up his political ideas.

The King was determined to stamp out heresy and rebellion against the Roman Catholic Church in his dominions, and he used the most terrible instrument for accomplishing his purpose. The Inquisition was made to rule his empire. With Philip II. *autos-da-fé* were truly 'acts of the faith' in the full meaning of the word, he attended them in state, and publicly declared that he would gladly carry wood to the stake for the burning of his own son if he should be a heretic.[3] This was the spirit in which Philip II. began his government. The seventeen provinces of the Dutch and Belgian Netherlands were to be ruled with the utmost cruelty. Philip II. might have said to them, in the words of the Bible, 'Whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke; my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.'

Democracy has a surprisingly short memory. The great charter of the Netherlands, 'The Great Privilege,' of which details have been given in Chapter III.,[4] had been solemnly confirmed and sworn to by their rulers in 1478, 1482, 1488, 1508, 1549 and 1555,[5] but successive princes and emperors had seen in the Dutch Charter merely a valueless piece of parchment and had treated their oath to respect the privileges of the various political units as an empty formality. Nevertheless, the politicians of the Netherlands had preserved a childlike confidence

[1] Martin Philippson, *Westeuropa im Zeitalter von Philip II.* 1882.
[2] Prescott, *Philip II.*, ii. 3.
[3] Cabrera de Cordova, *Filipe Segundo*, 1619, 236.
[4] See page 39. [5] Cerisier, *Histoire des Provinces Unies*, vol. ii. 238.*

in the efficacy of a piece of paper against the armed force of unscrupulous tyranny.

The constitutions and privileges of the various self-governing political units, of which the Netherlands were composed, differed widely, and these units were foolish enough to seek safety against tyranny and oppression not in their combined strength, but in some particularly clever paper arrangement made by themselves. Every province, every town, strove to put its relations with Philip on a particularly satisfactory footing—on paper. In the province of Holland, Philip II. had to swear that he would respect, not only the privileges of the province as his father and grandfather had done, but also that he would observe its most ancient customs and precedents. On the other hand, the province of Holland swore to obey the representatives of Philip only as long as they conducted themselves properly. On paper this arrangement was perfect, and no doubt most satisfactory to the clever people who had devised it. The Zeelanders promised fidelity in accordance with th rights and privileges peculiar to their province. The States of Utrecht made use of the opportunity for practising extortion, and insisted that Philip should grant them an extension of their power.[1] Every province had wishes of its own. Negotiations were endlessly protracted. Overyssel rendered the act of homage only after several years. Democratic politicians haggled with the proud Philip over questions of sovereignty in the same spirit in which they would haggle among themselves over a barrel of herrings or a load of salt.

Philip had much reason to be dissatisfied with the burghers of the Netherlands, who wore out his patience with unending negotiations, who addressed him with truly democratic freedom, as if they were his equals, and who, worst of all, ventured to oppose the Church of Rome, the basis of the Spanish power. Therefore Philip resolved to discipline these presumptuous and rebellious people, to reduce them to obedience, and to extirpate the enemies of the Roman Catholic Church, who were exceedingly numerous in the Netherlands, where the Reformation had taken a strong hold. His task was made easy by the Pope, who granted Philip a dispensation empowering him to break his oath

[1] Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book xix. chaps. xxi.–xxiii.*

to respect the privileges of the Netherlands.[1] The ancient principle of international law that no faith need be kept with infidels and heretics received practical application and was sanctified by the Vicar of Christ on earth.

The Netherlands were to be made submissive in political and religious matters by foreign troops directed by the Church, and were to be ruled with fire and sword. A foreign prelate, Cardinal Granvella, though nominally only a member of the Council of State, was made the ruler of the Netherlands, and the Inquisition, a tribunal which condemned the accused unheard, merely upon an anonymous denunciation which might be false, or upon a suspicion which might be groundless, and which made defence against the unknown accuser impossible,[2] became terribly busy in the unhappy Low Countries.

The Inquisition had two officers—a layman who, in the King's name, demanded forfeiture of the accused man's estate, and a priest who brought the accusation of heresy or infidelity—and these persecutors invented the vilest stratagems to ensnare people by threats and promises, and by highly-paid spies and professional denunciators.[3] Every day the Inquisition dragged its victims to the scaffold and to the stake. While the inhabitants of the Netherlands were being tortured, maimed, hanged, beheaded, roasted alive, quartered, buried alive, drowned, and burned at the stake, foreign ecclesiastics triumphantly strutted about, robbed, and extorted in the name of Christ, and gloated over the sufferings of their unhappy victims. Priests and monks indiscriminately confiscated such private properties as they coveted, and they ruined the traders by turning merchants and shopkeepers, and underselling them, being tax-free. Priests and monks treated the nominally free Netherlanders worse than savages would treat a conquered country, and themselves led most riotous lives. The burghers groaned under this terrible tyranny, but for a long time they did not venture to rise in rebellion, being overawed by the dreaded Spanish soldiery and lacking national cohesion and national leaders. Unfortunately, the burgher politicians knew better how to orate, to argue in the

[1] William of Orange, *Apologie*, 1581.**

[2] Llorente, *Histoire de l'Inquisition*, 1817, vol. i. 110–124.

[3] Brandt, *History of the Reformation*, 1720, i. 88.**

council room, and to intrigue than to act and to lead in the time of need. However, a deliverer arose for the unhappy Dutch people.

Prince William of Orange, the son of a German prince, had, as a boy, received a Lutheran education in his German home at Dillenburg. Afterwards he had come to the court of Charles V. as a page, he had taken to the Roman Catholic cult, and had quickly won the Emperor's confidence, which he had enjoyed during nine years.[1] Charles V. allowed young William to be present during the most confidential negotiations, and had entrusted the Prince with high military command when he was only twenty-two years old. The fact that the Emperor leaned on the shoulder of the Prince of Orange during the scene of abdication in Brussels described in the beginning of this chapter,[2] had had a symbolical meaning. William of Orange was considered to be the strongest support of the crown of Spain in the Netherlands.

Philip II. also gave his entire confidence to the young German prince, who had been raised to the much-coveted knighthood of the Golden Fleece, who had been made Stadtholder—that is, representative of the King, over the three provinces of Holland, Zeeland, and Utrecht—and had been nominated Admiral of Holland and Zeeland, &c. Prince William was the king's most eminent subject, and the leading personage in the Netherlands. He had evidently a great and glorious future before him in the service of the Spanish crown. Therefore, Philip felt certain of his interested attachment, and saw in the Prince of Orange a devoted servant and a willing tool.

Charles V. had obtained for his young favourite a wealthy Netherlandish wife, Ann of Egmont, daughter of the celebrated general the Count van Buren. His wife and her relations and friends had influenced the inclinations and sympathies of the Prince of Orange, as wives of statesmen frequently do, and Prince William had become a Netherlander in heart and soul. However, being a born courtier, he was careful never to betray his sympathy with the Netherlands to his master.

In 1559, Prince William was sent by the King of Spain on a political mission to Henry II. of France, and the French King was imprudent enough to give to the Prince details about a

[1] William of Orange, *Apologie*, 1581.**

[2] See page 77.

plot for the massacre of all their Protestant subjects, which Philip II. of Spain and Henry II. of France had formed between themselves.[1] Prince William listened in speechless horror to the account of the diabolical plan, but though he showed no outward sign of his emotion, his purpose was fixed from that hour.[2] He resolved 'to drive the Spanish vermin out of the country,'[3] and so save the Netherlands, which had become dearer to him than his life and all the advantages and rewards, the gold, land, and titles which Philip II. could offer.

Remembering the benefactions which Charles V. and Philip II. had bestowed on him, and truly appreciating the dangers and difficulties of an armed resistance by the Netherlands to the enormous military power of Spain, William endeavoured by entreaty and persuasion to alter Philip's policy of repression to one of forbearance and moderation. Immediately on his return from France, he and other of the noblemen of the Netherlands, among whom Counts Egmont and Horn were most prominent, sent remonstrances and complaints about the misgovernment in the Netherlands to King Philip. Unfortunately, these complaints and William's recommendations of toleration proved ineffectual.

Maddened by the unbearable ecclesiastical tyranny, the populace had at last, here and there, created noisy disturbances, destroyed the images in the Roman Catholic churches, and committed various excesses, but these served only to aggravate the cruel persecution of the Spaniards. These local riots were quite useless expressions of temper, for owing to lack of cohesion and of unity, lack of military organisation and of military experience, an armed national resistance against Spain was not to be thought of.

The local tumults and demonstrations against the tyranny of the Spaniards only increased their fury. The Duke of Alva, with a large army of soldiers, was sent to the Netherlands to reinforce the Spanish garrison and to take over the government. He had orders to arrest all the leading malcontents, to execute all opponents to the rule of Spain and of the Roman Catholic Church, and to confiscate their property. The Prince

[1] William of Orange, *Apologie*, 1581.**

[2] Motley, *Rise of the Dutch Republic*, 1855, vol. i. 239.*

[3] *Archives d'Orange*, série i. vol. i. 34.**

of Orange and the Counts Egmont and Horn, who previously had rendered invaluable services to the crown of Spain in peace and in war, but who had ventured to protest in an orderly manner to King Philip against the misrule of his representatives, and who eventually had become the leaders of an orderly agitation against the tyranny of those who administered the Netherlands in the King's name, were to be entrapped by fair words and to be put to death. Egmont and Horn, trusting in Philip's good faith, were treacherously seized and publicly beheaded, but the more far-sighted and less confiding Prince of Orange saved himself in time by withdrawing to Germany.[1]

Even at that supreme moment, when the country was on the brink of irretrievable ruin, the party warfare among the Dutch was as bitter as ever. The Reformed and the Lutherans, opposed to each other chiefly by interest and forming rather parties in the State than sects in the Church, were fighting between themselves for supremacy, and they hated each other so strongly that they forgot the common enemy. William had in vain tried to reconcile the opposing parties and to instil in them the sense of national duty and of patriotism. Before leaving for Germany, the Prince of Orange admonished the deputies of the Reformed Church: 'Do what you have so often been advised to do. Unite with the Lutherans. The differences between you are too small to keep you apart. If you unite, I shall be able to defend you with the help of the German Princes whom I then shall be able to call to your aid.' But the Reformed answered that their consciences would not allow them to co-operate with the Lutherans against Spain.[2] So overwhelmingly strong was party blindness and party passion in the Netherlands and so completely had the ambitions of self-seeking party-leaders destroyed in them the sense of national duty.

It is always exceedingly difficult to rule a dependency from a long distance, especially when that dependency has interests, views, and a character different from those of the ruling country. The war between Spain and the Netherlands, like that between England and her North American Colonies, was due perhaps more to a misunderstanding engendered by a faulty administrative system, and to an ill-informed home government, which

[1] Bor, *Oorspronck*, 1621, iv. 117.**

[2] Brandt, *History of the Reformation*, 1720, i. 253.**

ruled from a long distance, than to religious intolerance and to political pretensions in the one case and to commercial jealousy and intolerance in the other. In Madrid they called 'rebellion' that which in the Netherlands was considered to be legal and constitutional opposition. In New York they called 'oppression and tyranny' that which in London was considered to be legitimate taxation. The complaints and remonstrances of the Netherlands demanded the conciliatory mediation of a statesman. Philip II. sent them the hangman.[1]

Philip II. ruled the Netherlands from Spain by means of despatches and of an endless correspondence,[2] which is the worst and the most exasperating of all forms of government, as many English colonial officials who have had dealings with Downing Street will confirm, and he followed the bad advice of the Duke of Alva, his most trusted adviser, who had recommended to the King a policy of barbarous repression.[3] Therefore the Duke of Alva had been sent to the Netherlands and had been given discretionary power for 'pacifying' them. He erected in the Netherlands the celebrated Council of Troubles, better known under the name of the Council of Blood, as a supreme Court of Judicature, which condemned all those whom Alva wished to have despatched. He utterly subverted the constitution of the Dutch and Belgian Netherlands, deprived the towns of their charters, the people of their liberties and the courts of their power, making as much havoc among the population on pretence of the insurrection which had taken place, as the Inquisition had done among them on the pretence of heresy. 'Gallows, wheels, stakes, and trees in the highways were laden with carcases or limbs of such as had been hanged, beheaded, or roasted, so that the air which God had made for the respiration of the living had now become the common grave and habitation of the dead.'[4] For his eminent services in propagating the Roman Catholic Church the Vicar of Christ upon earth sent Alva a sword of honour and encouraged him to persevere in the prosecution of his Christian campaign.[5] The people fled from the country in thousands,

[1] Schiller, *Abfall der Niederlande*, Einleitung.
[2] Ranke, *Fürsten und Völker*, vol. i. 118.
[3] Grotius, *Annales*, 1657, i. 25.**
[4] Brandt, *History of the Reformation*, 1720, i. 261.**
[5] *Ibid.* 276.**

more than 100,000 houses were deserted,[1] and Alva boasted of having in six years, by the hand of justice, taken the lives of some 18,000 people, who would no longer complain of the Spanish Government.[2]

While Alva and his Spaniards were converting the Netherlands into a gigantic shambles, the inhabitants implored the Prince of Orange to come to their rescue. At first Prince William endeavoured, by vigorous representations sent to the King, and by public manifestoes addressed to the whole world, to cause Philip to alter his policy towards the Netherlands, but when he had exhausted all peaceful means, he resolved to act. He sold or pawned his estates and his other property, even his furniture, his plate and his jewellery,[3] and borrowed and collected money wherever he could, in order to raise an army with which to deliver the Netherlands from their cruel oppressors. Meanwhile, his most valuable estates and properties, which lay within the reach of the Spanish power, were confiscated, and his son was arrested at Leyden by order of the King, and carried prisoner to Spain. The Prince of Orange was reduced to abject poverty. Though he was not a Netherlander by birth, he staked his position, his prospects, his wealth, his life and the lives and prospects of his family for the Netherlands, in the hope of delivering his adopted country. A prince who was practically without land, without money and without subjects resolved to make war upon the mightiest empire then existing, the power, wealth and military strength of which seemed irresistible to the greatest European monarchs.

As this history is a political and economic history which aims at the analysis of causes, not a military and general history, which aims at the description of picturesque events, a lengthy description of the heroic struggle of the Netherlands against Spain will not be given, and would be superfluous, as the account of that struggle given by Motley, though it is exceedingly lengthy, cannot easily be improved upon. I shall therefore only mention a few of the leading facts which will throw much light on the cause of that war, and upon the influence which it had upon the rise and decline of the Netherlands.

The Prince of Orange repeatedly invaded the Netherlands

[1] Brandt, *History of the Reformation*, 1720, i. 277.**

[2] Grotius, *Annales*, 1657, ii. 43.** [3] Cerisier, *Histoire*, vol. iii. 140.

with armies which he raised and equipped at his own cost; he had some successes, and some defeats, but neither the loss of important battles nor the death of his three brothers, who fell in the battles of Heiligerlee and Mookerheyde, weakened his determination. He continued fighting against the Spanish, although he was at first little aided by the inhabitants of the Netherlands.

For some considerable time the people of the Netherlands bore the tyranny of the Duke of Alva in sullen silence, and it seemed that the Spaniards would meet with practically no resistance in butchering the helpless and horror-stricken population, when a chance incident caused the fortune of the unhappy country to turn in the most unexpected manner. In 1569, the Prince of Orange had, on the advice of Admiral Coligny, the leader of the Huguenots, issued letters of marque to noblemen, merchants and refugees,[1] and appointed a Lieutenant-Admiral to direct on his behalf and in his name maritime operations against the Spanish. Unfortunately, discipline and order could not be maintained among the roving Dutchmen who had sought refuge on the sea from the persecutions of the Spaniards. The homeless Dutch privateers became desperate and unruly pirates, who preyed on merchant ships without regard to their nationality, and they were attacked and mercilessly executed by their own countrymen of Amsterdam.[2]

Sweden and Denmark, though they were Protestant Powers, and though they sympathised with the Netherlands, were fearful of Spain, and would not allow the Dutch ships to avail themselves of their harbours. England was the nearest and most convenient base for the operations of the Dutch privateers, and these used the English ports freely for re-fitting and re-victualling their ships, and for resting their crews. However, the Duke of Alva had complained to Queen Elizabeth of the hospitality which the roving enemies of the King of Spain received in her country, and as England then was not in a position to bear the enmity of Spain, Queen Elizabeth felt compelled to expel the Dutch ships from her kingdom, and ordered them away.

[1] Meteren, *Historia Belgica*, iii. 59**; *Archives d'Orange*, série i. vol. iii. 351.**

[2] Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book xxiii. chaps. xviii. and xxiv*; *Archives d'Orange*, série i. vol. iii. 363.

When Count van der Marck, the commander of the privateers, found that no foreign Power would give an asylum to his weather-beaten ships, and that his provisions were running low, he sailed in despair, with his twenty-four ships, towards the Dutch coast to find there food and shelter. He set sail towards the Texel, in the north of Holland, intending to attack some of Alva's ships, but a contrary wind drove him towards the important harbour of Briel in the south, which lies close to the Hook of Holland. Finding that the Spanish garrison had been temporarily withdrawn from Briel, he seized it in the name of the Prince of Orange, and thus the homeless, wandering refugees from the Netherlands gained in 1572 their first footing on Dutch soil.[1]

The news of the capture of Briel by the irreconcilables spread like wildfire through the country, and put heart into the despairing Dutch, who rose everywhere against their oppressors. Town after town drove out the Spanish garrison and hoisted the Orange flag. Even the most important harbour of Flushing, which commands the route to Antwerp, whence the Spanish received their supplies and the specie for the payment of their troops, was lost to them. In a short time all the towns of the provinces of Holland and Zeeland, with the exception of Amsterdam and Middelburg, revolted.

Democracies are exceedingly fond of acting in accordance with precedent. Therefore, countless political fictions have to be created in democratic States. The towns which, after the capture of Briel, threw off the Spanish yoke, did not yet venture openly to oppose the King of Spain. Nominally, they revolted only against his lieutenant, the Duke of Alva. They continued professing allegiance to King Philip, and placed themselves under the protection and under the government of the Prince of Orange, considering him as the Stadtholder of the King of Spain. Therefore, we find proclamations by the Prince of Orange which solemnly begin: 'We, William Prince of Orange, by the authority of the invincible King Philip of Spain, Governor of Holland, Zeeland, Friesland, &c., declare.'[2]

Almost two thousand years ago, a Greek orator said, 'Neighbouring nations are never concerned at the misfortunes and the

[1] Bor, *Oorspronck*, 1621, vi. 265**; Motley, *Dutch Republic*, part ii. chap. vi.*

[2] Brandt, *History of the Reformation*, 1720, i. 318.**

civil wars which may befall one of their neighbours. The weaker States rejoice in them, because they increase their security, those of equal strength are glad because they increase their opportunities of aggrandisement, and the stronger Powers are contented because they facilitate their conquests.'[1] This maxim is now as true as it was when it was first pronounced. The neutral Powers, especially England and France, desirous of weakening Spain, did their best to keep the war alive and sent the Dutch volunteers money and arms. Encouraged by the assistance they received from foreign countries, and by the invasions of the Prince of Orange, the revolted provinces continued to struggle, and the insurrection became general.

The wars of the sixteenth century were usually fought by mercenary troops, but although many mercenaries assisted the Dutch, the people themselves took arms, and fought, contemptuous of death, for their liberty. However, we must draw a sharp distinction between the resistance of the Belgian and of the Dutch Netherlands. The large industrial towns of the Belgian Netherlands swarmed with a noisy rabble, enfeebled by sedentary occupation and the exhausted air of the cities. The Dutch Netherlands were peopled by men who lived on the sea, and who, by a constant fight with Nature, had become determined, warlike, and even ferocious. Therefore, while the people of Flanders and Brabant were butchered like sheep by the Spaniards, the Dutch of the sea provinces fought like lions and defeated the veterans of Spain.

Neither crushing defeats nor successful sieges, with consequent massacres of all the inhabitants, could break the courage of the Dutch. Men, women and children fought for the liberty of the country as wild animals fight for their lives, and the inhabitants of besieged towns, such as Leyden, would rather eat dogs, cats, leather and the bark of trees, or starve to death, than surrender. More than a million people are said to have perished in that tremendous struggle for liberty.

Unfortunately, even during the heroic period of Dutch history, local and individual selfishness frequently triumphed over patriotism, and the wealthiest towns proved to be the most grasping, the most unnational and the most cowardly. While

[1] Herodes, *De Republica.*

the Republic was yet young and weak, the difficulties of the war and the misery of the country arose principally from the fact that Amsterdam and Middelburg in Zeeland, two exceedingly flourishing towns, would not make common cause with the others against Spain.[1] Many towns refused to pay the taxes required for national defence, imagining that liberty consisted in freedom from taxation. Holland and Zeeland would furnish troops only for the defence of their own territories but not for that of the whole country, being unable to understand that they were parts of a nation.[2] The Amsterdamers would make no agreement to accept the authority of the Prince of Orange, except upon terms which would enable them to 'govern their governor.'[3] Every province and every town tried to follow that course which would be most advantageous to itself, and took little heed of the generality. Hence, Prince William was unceasingly occupied in accommodating violent quarrels among the allies, which impaired the strength of the union and threatened to destroy it. His constant and most difficult task consisted not in managing the country but in managing the obstinate, conceited, and selfish, or merely stupid and short-sighted, burgher-politicians, and in keeping his disunited followers together by persuasion and entreaty. Only a born statesman, an unselfish patriot, and a man of sleepless vigilance and boundless energy, patience and activity, such as was William I., could hold all these individual, very self-asserting and very selfish units together by his watchfulness, tact, eloquence and, before all, by his example of devotion and self-sacrifice.

The Netherlands had no properly arranged taxation for national defence, resembling in this the British Empire, which has no taxation for imperial defence, and the disadvantages resulting from this lack of organisation were very great. As the levying of national taxes for national defence would have hurt the sense of independence of the provinces, the expenses for the war had to be found by individual contributions. The amount of the contributions depended upon the good will of each single province, and each single province tried to pay as little as possible into the common exchequer, desiring to shift the

[1] Grotius, *Annales*, 1657, ii. 40.** [2] Cerisier, *Histoire*, vol. iii. 529.*
[3] Motley, *Rise of the Dutch Republic*, 1855, iii. 323.*

financial burden to other shoulders.[1] 'They were not ashamed to take financial advantage of one another even during the most serious position of the war.'[2]

The lack of a centralised organisation possessing sufficient authority to direct, and if necessary to compel, individual members of the union to pay their share caused William, in 1581, to complain in a speech to the deputies, 'Each province has its council and each land its forces and its money, so that that which is much to all is little to each one. It is true that a central council has been established, but it is without power. Where there is no authority, how can there be discipline? How can finance, justice and other affairs be regulated? And there can never be authority from those who are not allowed to pay out a sou, as neither I nor the council can do.'[3]

The Dutch provinces and towns not only quarrelled among themselves about the necessary contributions towards national defence, but were mean enough to attack Prince William himself about money matters. In September 1579 the Prince complained, 'The Roman Catholics publish everywhere that his Excellency has deceived them, and not kept his oath, and that he has introduced the reformed religion, while the Protestants blame the Prince because he has allowed himself to be corrupted by the Roman Catholic party, and that he has assisted his Protestant co-religionists only owing to the gifts and promises which he has received. Others assert that he will make himself master of the country, because he has placed garrisons in towns and because he opposes the conclusion of the peace for which everybody longs. He does all this in order to maintain his autocratic position.'[4] No wonder that, on August 27, 1580, Prince William despairingly wrote to Count John of Nassau: 'I seem to be born under an evil star, for everything I do is maliciously interpreted.'[5]

In consequence of the ill-usage which he had received, the lack of confidence which was shown to him and the mean and cruel personal attacks to which he was exposed, Prince William

[1] Wenzelburger, *Geschichte der Niederlande*, 1879, i. 712.
[2] Van Deventer, *Gedenkstukken*, 1860, iii. 142.**
[3] Ruth Putnam, *William the Silent*, 1895, ii. 33.
[4] *Archives d'Orange*, série i. vol. viii. 92.**
[5] *Ibid.* 387.**

more than once grew tired of his onerous position. In 1574, for instance, he complained that the various self-governing towns not only were wrangling among themselves about the contributions for national defence, but that they even refused to receive the necessary garrisons, while the people were told that the national taxes went into his own pockets.[1]

As the necessary supplies for the defence of the country were denied him by the politicians, notwithstanding his complaints, he resigned his office.[2] Only then was he given larger power, and in July 1575 the form of government was slightly but insufficiently remodelled. The document in which that new form of government was embodied laid down that 'union is necessary for keeping together the State, and, as absolute unity is not possible, because the views and wills of the individuals will always differ, it is necessary that the government of the State should have some compelling power and a supreme head.[3] A central compelling power was, indeed, urgently required in the Netherlands; but, notwithstanding the foregoing resolution, it was never created, and owing to the lack of such a central compelling power the Netherlands were, later on, defeated by States over which they could easily have triumphed had they possessed true unity, a leader, and a national organisation for war.

Prince William led a busy life. He had to organise and to direct the military and naval forces of the young State, to direct its foreign and domestic policy, and last, but not least, to mediate between the towns and provinces, which, by their clamorous disputes, hindered every enterprise. Besides, he had constantly to protect the weak minority of the nation against the injustice and intolerance of a powerful majority, for a democratic majority is the worst of tyrants.

The victorious Protestants were quite justified in savagely retaliating upon the Spanish soldiers and repaying cruelty with cruelty, but it was tyrannical and most impolitic on the part of the Protestant Dutchmen to rage with barbarous savagery against their Roman Catholic countrymen. The short-sighted fanaticism of the Protestant majority in the Dutch provinces had the most

[1] Resol. Holl., October 20, November 1, 1574.
[2] *Ibid.* October 13, November 25, 1574.
[3] Van Kampen, *Geschichte*, 1831, i. 416.

calamitous consequences for the Netherlands. In the first place, it endlessly prolonged the war, for the King of Spain, the champion of Roman Catholicism, would not see his co-religionists ill-treated; in the second place, it led to an incurable division between the Roman Catholics and the Protestant section of the Netherlands, which rent the country in two parts.

Had it not been for the cruel persecution of the Roman Catholics, the King of Spain might have made peace; he would, no doubt, have lost both the Dutch and the Belgian Netherlands,[1] and the two combined would have formed a State which might have 'braved a world in arms.' Through the intolerance, short-sightedness, and selfishness of the Dutch Protestants, who placed their personal interests above the national interests, Spain was enabled to maintain her hold upon the Roman Catholic Belgian Netherlands, and to continue the war for a long time, making the Belgian Netherlands her *place d'armes*. Unfortunately a democracy is swayed rather by emotion and impulse than by logic and common sense. Therefore a popular government often finds it easier to follow a popular, though ill-considered and harmful, policy summed up in an effective 'cry,' than a wise but unpopular policy which requires explanation.

Prince William was a tolerant man, and he had done all in his power to protect the Roman Catholics in the Netherlands against their Protestant brethren, both from sentimental and from practical political reasons. The instructions which he gave to Count van der Marck, his lieutenant for the province of Holland, were 'to protect the Catholics and their clergy in the free exercise of their religion as well as the good Protestants, forbidding the one to molest the other under the highest penalties.'[2] Unfortunately the Prince's instructions proved unavailing to stem the popular sport of hunting Roman Catholics, and van der Marck himself had to be arrested for 'having murdered many ecclesiastical persons and other innocent people, contrary to his oath and instructions, for reason of which many innocent persons had been obliged to fly the country.'[3]

On November 4, 1576, a terrible misfortune befell the Belgian

[1] Cerisier, *Histoire des Provinces Unies*, vol. iii. 182.*

[2] Brandt, *History of the Reformation*, 1720, vol. i. 299.**

[3] *Ibid.* 302.**

Netherlands. On that day a body of Spanish soldiers, who had mutined because their pay was in arrear, marched upon Antwerp, intending to plunder it. Antwerp was at that time the greatest commercial town in the world, the storehouse of Europe, and the most magnificent city existing. She was the world's money market. The Greshams, the English Rothschilds of the time, had made the headquarters of their business at Antwerp, where the Fuggers, the Welsers, the Stettens of Augsburg, the Spinolas of Genoa, the Peruzzis of Florence, all the greatest bankers and all monarchs of Christendom maintained agents. Nowhere in the world did such enormous financial transactions take place as on the Antwerp Bourse.

According to the Spanish authorities, the Spanish mutineers numbered only between 3,500 and 5,000 men, and it seemed madness that such a little troop should attack a town of almost 200,000 inhabitants, which was garrisoned by 12,000 professional soldiers, and which contained many thousands of volunteer citizen soldiers. However, the contempt in which the Spanish soldiers held the gigantic merchant city, its hired soldiers, and its pleasure-loving and unwarlike population, was only too well justified. Hardly any resistance was offered by the citizens, who fled panic-stricken, and who communicated their terror to the professional soldiers. Of the citizens of Antwerp and their mercenaries more than 8,000 were slaughtered, drowned, and burned,[1] while the Spaniards lost only 200 killed and 400 wounded.[2] During three days and three nights the unhappy town was sacked and plundered. Murder and rapine reigned supreme, 500 magnificent mansions were burnt to the ground, incredibly large quantities of gold and silver were carried off by the soldiers, the loss of property amounted to almost £3,000,000,[3] and the centre of the world's wealth and commerce was, by a single stroke, reduced to beggary and starvation.

That terrible disaster destroyed Antwerp's commercial supremacy. The city was rapidly emptied of its best and its most industrious inhabitants, who fled to Germany, France, England, and especially to Holland. When Guicciardini followed up his description of the Netherlands, issued in 1566, by a new

[1] B. Mendoza, *Commentaires*, 1591, 350–353.

[2] Bor, *Oorspronck*, 1621, ix. 180.** [3] Gens, *Histoire d'Anvers*, 1861, 487.

edition in 1580, he made in the latter the remark that Antwerp's wealth compared with its former wealth as night compares with day.[1] At one time 19,000 people from Antwerp went to Holland, of whom most settled in Amsterdam, because that town was most conveniently situated for commercial purposes,[2] and because the insular position of the province of Holland made it almost impregnable against an attack by land, and removed it from the danger of an assault by the Spanish. Thus Amsterdam became the heir of Antwerp's commercial greatness and prosperity and the centre of the world's trade.

The terrible carnage and the sack of Antwerp had a powerful effect on the negotiations between the provinces of the Dutch and Belgian Netherlands, which, at the time, were going on in the town of Ghent. The negotiators were struck with consternation at the 'Spanish Fury,' and four days after the taking of Antwerp, on November 8, the celebrated Pacification of Ghent was concluded. The Pacification of Ghent was a treaty of alliance between the provinces of the Dutch and Belgian Netherlonds for mutual defence against the Spaniards. 'The States of Brabant, Flanders, Artois, Hainault, and other countries on the one hand, and those of Holland and Zeeland with their confederates on the other hand,' with due solemnity 'mutually agreed to unite with each other for expelling the Spaniards and other foreigners out of the country, and afterwards to promote the calling together and assembling of the States-General to the end that they might regulate the affairs of the nation, both parties, agreeing bona fide to submit to the decision of the said States.'[3] All the sanguinary decrees made by the Spaniards were to be cancelled, general toleration was to be established, the Prince of Orange was to receive his confiscated estates situated in the Netherlands, and to be made Stadtholder and Admiral of all the provinces of both Netherlands.

Amid the indescribable jubilation of the people a peaceful and powerful confederation was thus founded, which embraced, roughly speaking, the present kingdoms of Holland and Belgium, which joined together the great industrial and manufacturing

[1] W. Naudé, *Die Getreidehandelspolitik*, 1896, 329.*
[2] Werdenhagen, *De Rebus Publicis*, 1631.
[3] Bor, *Oorspronck*, 1621, ix. 191.**

towns and the wealthy agricultural districts of Flanders and Brabant, and the Dutch Netherlands, with their great maritime industries. Under the guidance of a sagacious Prince, a number of free democracies united themselves, intending to establish a commonwealth which was to be a stronghold of democracy and Protestantism, and a mighty bulwark against tyranny, and which, through its great and varied natural resources and industries, and the number, diligence, thrift, intelligence, and enterprise of its inhabitants, seemed destined to arrive at the greatest power and glory.

Bismarck repeatedly said, 'States are formed not by speeches and by the resolutions of majorities, but by blood and iron.'[1] Only a common history of sufferings borne in common, the pride of possessions owned in common, and the consciousness of common interests can create a commonwealth. Paper is a very unsatisfactory cement between nations. Treaties of alliance and treaties of union are not worth the paper on which they are written, if their binding force rests upon the good faith, not the common interests, of the signatories. Unfortunately for the Netherlands not a spirit of joyful sacrifice, but the spirit of the 'Great Privilege,'[2] had prevailed when the Union of Ghent was concluded. The corroding influence of political selfishness soon dissolved the Union. Local selfishness proved stronger than patriotism. An inveterate party spirit, and the ambitions of the local dignitaries, who did not like submitting to the generality, aided by treachery among those who were open to bribes, and by fanaticism among the ignorant and passionate section of the community, undermined the national bulwark almost as soon as it was reared.[3]

A large part of the Belgian Netherlands—the Celtic part—was devotedly Roman Catholic; another part of the Belgian Netherlands contained a mixed population of Protestants and Roman Catholics; the Dutch Netherlands were chiefly Protestant. The Roman Catholic minority in the Dutch Netherlands and the Protestant minority in the Belgian Netherlands were, of course, greatly pleased with the toleration championed by the far-sighted and moderate Prince William, which had been established by the

[1] Speeches, September 30, 1862, January 28, 1886, August 10, 1891.

[2] See page 39.

[3] Motley, *Rise of the Dutch Republic.**

Pacification of Ghent; but toleration was not at all to the taste of the zealous religious majorities in both halves of the Netherlands, which wished to gratify their passion and increase their power by the persecution and conversion of the religious minority. In purely Roman Catholic Hainault the toleration of Protestantism was looked upon with horror as the greatest impiety.[1]

The mania for the persecution of Protestants and Roman Catholics instigated the re-enaction of the scenes of the Inquisition, and the Prince of Orange saw with dismay the cleavage between the Protestant and Roman Catholic halves of the Netherlands widening. The Netherlands were visibly falling to pieces.

The statesmen of Spain, who had been unable to subdue the Netherlands by force, now resolved to break up the loose and precarious union of the seventeen provinces by increasing their differences through intrigue and corruption, and they succeeded. Skilfully playing upon the jealousy of the confederate princes, and on the vanity and ambition of the local dignitaries and politicians, they succeeded in driving a wedge between the two halves of the Netherlands. Emissaries from Spain gained supporters by fair words, lavish promises, and bribery without stint, and Don John of Austria, Philip II.'s representative, succeeded through his insinuating manners in drawing the Belgian Roman Catholics away from the confederation, and in inflaming them against the Protestant Dutch. Both the Roman Catholic and the Protestant halves of the Netherlands became more and more dissatisfied with their union. Both clamoured for a separation.

The decisive step was taken on January 6, 1579, when a separate Roman Catholic union 'for maintaining the Roman Catholic religion and the King of Spain's authority, and for opposing the religious peace,' the Union of Arras, was founded by Artois, Hainault, and Douay.[2] Thus the nucleus of the present kingdom of Belgium was formed, round which the other provinces of the western Netherlands gradually grouped themselves. To counteract the secessionist movement a Protestant union was required, and Prince William had, with prudent fore-

[1] Brandt, *History of the Reformation*, 1720, vol. i. 342.**

[2] Bor, *Oorspronck*, 1621, xiii. 136.**

sight, made preparations to deal with the emergency. On January 23, 1579, immediately after the formal secession of the three provinces mentioned, a Protestant combination, the Union of Utrecht, was formally concluded, by which the Protestant provinces of the Dutch Netherlands formed a new alliance for mutual defence. The entreaties of the Prince of Orange and of the States-General of the United Netherlands to the States of Artois to maintain a 'sincere union for expelling the Spaniards and for re-establishing the liberty and the ancient prosperity of their poor country,' and for uniting in the spirit of toleration and mutual good-will were in vain.[1] The union of the seventeen provinces of the Netherlands existed only during three years. Party selfishness, local selfishness, and individual selfishness of party politicians, political vices which often masquerade under the name of individualism, had split the Netherlands in two, and were to bring about centuries of misery to millions of people, as will be seen in the course of this book.

By the Union of Utrecht, the foundation of the Dutch Netherlands and of the present Kingdom of Holland was laid. The Act of Union was the fundamental law of the Dutch, and it remained in force up to the revolution of 1795. That document is of the highest interest and importance, because it had the very greatest influence upon the rise and the decline of the Netherlands. Therefore, the following extract from its provisions should be read with attention:—

(1) The seven provinces unite themselves for ever as if they were but one province, and so as never to be divided by testament, donation, exchange, sale, or agreement, reserving to each particular province and city all privileges, rights, customs, and statutes. In adjudging of these, or of differences that may arise between any of the provinces, the rest shall not intervene except in so far as is necessary to bring about an agreement.

(2) They bind themselves to assist one another with life and fortunes against all attacks made upon any of them.

(4) All frontier towns belonging to the Union, if old, are to be fortified at the charge of the province where they lie; if new, they are to be erected at the charge of the generality.

Bor, *Oorspronck*, 1621, xiii. 94 ff.**

(5) All imposts and customs are, from three months to three months, to be offered to the highest bidder, and to be employed for the common defence.

(8) All inhabitants from eighteen to sixty years old are to be listed and trained within a month.

(9) Peace and war and truce may not be made, and taxes not be levied, without the unanimous consent of all the provinces. Other matters are to be decided by the majority of provincial votes. Differences that shall arise between the provinces upon matters affecting the generality are to be submitted to the stadtholders.

(11) Neighbouring princes, lords, lands, and cities may be admitted into the Union by consent of the provinces.

(13) In matters of religion, Holland and Zeeland may act as seems good unto themselves. The other provinces may regulate religious matters at their pleasure, provided every one is free to exercise his religion. No man may be examined or entrapped for religion, in accordance with the Pacification of Ghent.

(16) Differences between several provinces shall be accommodated by the others; differences concerning all, by the stadtholders. The sentence is to be pronounced within a month, and without appeal or revision.

(21) Interpretation of these articles is to remain with the States; but, in case of their differing, with the stadtholders.[1]

If we analyse the original document of the Union of Utrecht, which is too long to be given in full in this book, we find that that Union was not by any means an organic Union, but merely an alliance concluded by seven independent sovereign States called provinces. The Union did not create a homogeneous State, such as the United States or Switzerland, but merely a confederation; because, unfortunately, no national authority able to act on behalf, and in the name, of the whole in important matters had been created. The United Netherlands as little possessed a national organisation as the British Empire has an Imperial organisation. However, although no true union was created among the numerous towns and other self-governing bodies of the Dutch Netherlands, the Union of Utrecht distinctly made the stadtholder a link of union and a national referee for the seven

[1] Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book xxvii. chap. ii.*

provinces, as may be seen from Articles 9, 16, and 21 of the Treaty of Utrecht, which laid down:—(1) That if the provinces cannot agree with regard to a truce, peace, war, or taxation, the matter shall provisionally be decided by the stadtholders, who adjudicate upon these differences; (2) that misunderstandings or disputes between some of the provinces shall be submitted to the other provinces for settlement, and, if these differences concern all the provinces, they shall be decided by the stadtholders; (3) that if any of the articles of the Union should be found obscure and give rise to disputes, their interpretation shall be left to the judgment of the confederates, and, if they cannot agree, they shall refer the subject to the stadtholders for decision.

By these articles it was intended to bring unity among provinces which had reserved all sovereign rights to themselves, leaving the State as a whole without authority.

The Union of Utrecht created, not a national government such as is possessed by the United States, but merely a national debating society, the States-General, for these could not decide on any important matter without referring it for decision to the individual provinces, their principals. Although the States-General affected to speak in the name of the nation, they were merely a deliberative committee composed of deputies sent by the seven provinces. The States-General could not act in any important matter except with the unanimous approval of the provinces. They could, of course, discuss matters and pass resolutions, but these resolutions had binding force only in those provinces which approved of them. Every province had a representative assembly of its own, to which the individual towns and other political units sent their deputies; but in these also absolute unanimity was required to make a measure binding on all parties composing a province. Hence a single town could arrest the activity of its province and of the whole State.

The Treaty of Utrecht was a very vague and a very unsatisfactory document. It as little provided a definite organisation of the State and a definite distribution of power as does the British Constitution. The organisation of the State and the distribution of power, for which the constitution ought to have provided, were left to time, chance, and opportunity, factors

which are usually summed up in the word evolution, a word which explains little and excuses much. The very vagueness of the original constitution of the Dutch Netherlands was bound to cause a never-ending struggle between all those parties which could aspire to a commanding influence in the State, and paramountcy was certain not to fall to that party which best was fitted to rule the State, but to that party which through chance, clamour, unscrupulous pressure, or violence prevailed at the psychological moment.

If we look at the constitution of the Dutch Netherlands, as laid down in the Union of Utrecht, from the practical point of view, we find the following astonishing facts:—The Treaty of Union joined together seven individual States called provinces and fifty-six individual towns, which formed fifty-six smaller States within these seven States. All these representative and elective bodies, sixty-three in all, together with the numerous representatives of the Dutch nobility, had to combine and to arrive at unanimity in order to make valid any resolution of national importance. Therefore, it was about as difficult to pass a measure affecting the whole of the United Netherlands as it is to carry through a measure affecting the whole British Empire. The United Netherlands were a loose conglomerate of independent political units falsely called a State.

As unanimity had to be created among sixty-three debating societies and numerous individual representatives of the nobility, deliberations and discussions were endlessly protracted; the State was always divided against itself, not with regard to some, but with regard to all, national measures, and matters of small importance threatened to imperil the loose union of the Netherlands.

The constitution of the Netherlands was almost identical with the present constitution of the British Empire, the colonies of which, though dependent in name, are independent in fact, because a representative central authority authorised to act on behalf of the whole is lacking. Imperial defence is a word without meaning, for there are no Imperial naval and military authorities. The British Empire depends for its defence, like an ill-organised charity, entirely on voluntary contributions, and these are apt to be very unsatisfactory when times are bad.

A common centre of government, a national executive able to bind and to direct the whole of the Netherlands, at least in matters of war and of foreign policy, and controlling certain sources of national taxation sufficient to carry out the national policy, was required, but that common centre was lacking. Being unorganised, the Netherlands were as little a State as a number of unconnected wheels and cranks are a machine. The government of the Netherlands represented individualism, and the policy of Home Rule carried to its logical conclusion. The Treaty of Utrecht, instead of creating a nation, established a complicated mechanism able to produce little except talk, administrative anarchy, and national disorganisation.

The practical effect of the Union of Utrecht was that it arranged that the self-governing States and cities were to discuss matters in common, and that the stadtholder was to act as a chairman and referee. He was to mediate in all differences, to bring the opposing interests into line, to serve as the connecting link, and to create unity among the confederates, and it was quite clear that the abolishment, or even the weakening, of the stadtholderate would rob the Netherlands of all cohesion and power. Therefore the co-operation of all the independent sovereign provinces and towns in national affairs and the existence of the Netherlands Republic depended chiefly on the stadtholder, and only an exceedingly able man could satisfactorily fill that most difficult office. Happily, William I. was such a man, and he acted with the greatest success, owing to his wisdom and to his tact. His position resembled that held by the King of England in the British Empire. While William held the supreme authority in the provinces of Holland and Zeeland alone, he could direct the other provinces only by his influence, not by his authority, for in these he could only entreat, admonish and warn, but not command. Therefore, notwithstanding his great prestige and ability, he never was able to bring a true unity into the republic, and he bitterly exclaimed, 'It seems that the deputies representing the different States have been sent rather to excuse the provinces, their masters, and to act as their attorneys in advancing their parochial interests, than to work for the welfare of the commonwealth.'[1] The United

[1] *Archives d'Orange*, série i. vol. vii. 150.**

Netherlands, like the British Empire, did not even possess a commander-in-chief for the whole commonwealth, for the stadtholder was commander-in-chief only for his particular province, nor was there a national army and a national navy. Each province looked after its own military forces, as do the British colonies.[1]

The influence and power of William I. were increased by the fact that people obeyed him willingly, because they saw in their 'Father William' the deliverer of their country who had originated the rebellion, who had defeated the best Spanish diplomats and the best Spanish generals. William I. was the intellectual and the military leader of the Dutch, the centre of the Dutch resistance.

The lengthy war was exhausting the resources of Spain and exasperating the King. Philip had been unable to subdue the Dutch Netherlands by force, and, though he had been able to break up the greater union of the Netherlands, the Union of Ghent, he failed, notwithstanding his constant intrigues, to destroy the Union of the Dutch Netherlands concluded at Utrecht. Having been foiled by William in all his attempts at shattering the military force of the Union and at destroying its cohesion, he at last resolved to deprive the Dutch of their great leader, expecting that with the Prince of Orange the republic of the Netherlands would fall. William I. was the keystone in the complicated fabric of the State. King Philip meant to withdraw that keystone.[2]

Philip had repeatedly tried to deprive the Netherlands of the services of the Prince of Orange by offering him enormous bribes,[3] and to have him secretly despatched by the poison or the dagger of the assassin, but all his attempts had proved futile. Therefore, Cardinal Granvella had advised the King publicly to offer a large reward for the murder of the Prince, because, if the reward was large enough, murderers from all parts of the world would eagerly compete with each other in order to earn it.[4] The Cardinal's diabolical advice was accepted by the King, when the conclusion of the Union of Utrecht made it apparent that the

[1] Cerisier, *Histoire des Provinces Unies*, vol. iv. 281.*

[2] *Archives d'Orange*, série i. vol. vii. 166.** [3] *Ibid.* vol. vi. 629.**

[4] Gachard, *Correspondance de Guillaume*, vi. 32.**

Netherlands were determined never again to submit to Spain, and to create a separate State under William's guidance. Therefore in June 1580, 'A Proclamation and an Edict in form of a Proscription made by the Majesty of the King our Lord, against William of Nassau, Prince of Orange, as the chief captain and disturber of the state of Christendom and especially of these Low Countries; by which everyone is authorised to hurt him and to kill him, as a public plague; with a reward to him that shall do it and shall be assisting and aiding thereunto,' was published broadcast in the Netherlands and throughout the vast dominions of the King of Spain.

After reciting all that the Prince of Orange has done in opposition to Spain, the King proclaimed the following to all men:

'Because he hath been the public plague of Christendom, we publish him for a traitor and a wicked man, the enemy of us and of our countries; and as such a one, have proscribed him, and do perpetually and for ever proscribe him, out of the said countries, all other our estates, kingdoms and seigniories: interdicting and forbidding all our subjects, of what estate, condition or quality whatsoever they be, not to haunt, live, be conversant, speak or communicate with him, openly or secretly, nor to receive him or lodge him in their houses, nor to minister unto him with meat, drink, fire, or any other necessaries of any sort whatsoever, on pain of incurring our indignation and displeasure, as hereafter shall be said. And so we permit all, whether they be our subjects or others, for the execution of our said declaration and edict to stay him, let him and safely keep his person and life, giving the said William of Nassau over to all men as the enemy of mankind, granting unto everyone all his goods, movable and unmovable that can take, occupy, or conquer the same wheresoever they be, except those goods which are at this present in our power and possession. And to the end, indeed, that this matter may be the more effectually and readily performed, and so, by that means, our said people the sooner delivered from this tyranny and oppression, we, willing to reward virtue, and to punish vice, do promise on the word of a king, and as the minister of God, that if there be any found, either among our own subjects, or amongst strangers, so noble of courage, and

desirous of our service and the public good, that knoweth any way how to execute our said decree, and to set us and himself free from the aforesaid plague, delivering him unto us quick or dead, or at least taking his life from him, we will cause to be given, and provided for him and his heirs, in good land or ready money, immediately after the thing shall be accomplished, the sum of 25,000 crowns of gold; and if he hath committed any offence or fault, how great and grievous soever it be, we promise to pardon him the same, and from henceforth do pardon him; and if he were not before noble, we do make him noble for his courage and valiant act, and if the principal doer take with him for his aid in the accomplishment of this enterprise or execution of this his fact, other persons beside himself, we will bestow upon them benefits and rewards, and will give to every one of them according to their degree, and according to that service which they shall yield unto us in this behalf; pardoning them also whatsoever they have ill done, and making them likewise noble.'[1]

This astounding document, which cannot fail to create horror and execration even in the breasts of criminals, should be studied attentively, partly because it gives an idea of the incredible savagery with which the Spanish monarch waged war upon the Netherlands, but principally because it clearly shows that King Philip feared Prince William more than the people of the Netherlands and their army. If Philip had not seen in Prince William the greatest factor of the national strength of the Dutch, he would not have stooped so low as to disgrace himself and his posterity for all eternity by making himself, by public proclamation, the accomplice of a common criminal.

The terrible persecutions which the Netherlands had suffered at the hands of the King of Spain caused them at last solemnly to abjure the dominion of Spain and to destroy the fiction, which hitherto had prevailed, that their opposition was directed, not against the King of Spain, but only against his representatives in the Netherlands. On July 26, 1581, the Netherlands published an edict to that effect, which is most interesting, because it contains the first statement of the rights of man as formulated

[1] *Apologie, or Defence of the most noble Prince William, by the Grace of God Prince of Orange, &c., printed in French and in all other languages at Delft*, 1581.**

by a representative national assembly against a tyrannical ruler and because it has served as a precedent and a model in all subsequent revolutions—such as the English Revolution, the French Revolution, and the revolution of the North American colonies against Great Britain. The Act of Abjuration stated:

'The people were not created by God for the sake of the Prince, and only to submit to his commands, whether pious or impious, right or wrong, and to serve him as his slaves; but, on the contrary, the Prince was made for the good of the people (without whom he could not be a prince) in order to feed, preserve and govern them according to justice and equity, as a father his children and a shepherd his flock; that whoever in opposition to these principles pretends to rule his subjects as if they were his bondmen, ought to be deemed a tyrant, and for that reason may be rejected or deposed, especially by virtue of the resolution of the States of the nation, if the subjects, after having made use of the most humble supplications and prayers, can find no other means to divert him from his tyrannical purposes, nor to secure their own native rights. Such forfeitures and depositions of princes, which have frequently happened elsewhere, may more especially take place in these provinces, that are governed according to their rights and privileges, which the Prince is obliged to swear to, and who, upon the violation of these conditions, forfeits his sovereignty.

'The King of Spain, hearkening to his Spanish Council, contrary to his father's advice, having taken upon him to break through the laws of the country, having rejected several proposals of peace, and having abused the treaties set on foot for that purpose, by sowing discord among the people, with intent the more easily to effect the ruin of the natives of these countries by degrees—is for these reasons rejected, &c.'[1]

Such was the reply of the Netherlands to the diabolical proscription of their beloved chief.

The enormous reward of 25,000 pieces of gold offered for the murder of Prince William of Orange was exceedingly tempting to all murderers and Roman Catholic fanatics, and on July 10, 1584, Prince William was foully murdered by Balthasar Gerard, who shot him point-blank with a pistol loaded

[1] Brandt, *History of the Reformation*, 1720, vol. i. 383.**

with three bullets.[1] The Prince died almost immediately, and his last words, which are characteristic of him, were: 'I am wounded unto death. May God have mercy on my soul and save my poor people.'[2] Thus died the greatest patriot and statesman of his time with a loving word for his persecuted people on his lips, which was carefully entered upon the 'Register van de Resolutien der Generaliteit,' the official minutes of the States-General.

Prince William lies buried in Delft, and the Latin inscription on his monument, which was erected to his memory by the State, in 1621, appropriately sums up his character and his services to his adopted country. The inscription says:

'To the great and good God and to the immortal memory of William of Nassau, Prince of Orange, the Father of his country, who preferred the prosperity of the Netherlands to his own and to that of his family. He did twice levy and bring in an army chiefly at his own charge. He repelled the tyranny of Spain, directing the States. He recovered and restored the true religion and the ancient laws of his country, and he left its full liberty to be established by his son, Prince Maurice, the heir of his father's virtues. To him the States of the United Netherlands have erected this monument in order to perpetuate the memory of that truly pious, prudent and invincible hero, whom Philip II. of Spain, the terror of Europe, dreaded, but not being able to terrify or conquer him, he hired an assassin treacherously to murder him.'

This is the simple but eloquent epitaph to one of the greatest heroes and one of the noblest characters whom the world has seen.

The murderer of the Prince was caught and executed, and King Philip, who had instigated the crime, referred in a letter, dated July 20, 1590, to 'Gerard's too generous act, which merits to be celebrated with praise and the memory of the deceased deserves to be honoured.' These were King Philip's words of praise, but his acts were not in accordance with his words, for Philip did not blush to swindle Gerard's family out of the 25,000 crowns of gold which, according to the King's procla-

[1] Strada, *De Bello Belgico*, Dec. II. v.; Bor, *Oorspronck*, 1621, xviii. 422.**

[2] Grotius, *Annales* **; Wagenaar *; *Archives d'Orange.***

mation, were to be given either in good land or ready money to the murderer himself, if he should escape unhurt, 'or to his heirs immediately after this thing shall be accomplished.' After years of procrastination, the mother and sisters of the murderer received the lordships of Lievremont, Hastal, and Damartin. Their complaints and protests were not heeded, and they died in penury.[1]

With William I. the hope and the freedom of the Netherlands seemed likely to be carried to the grave. King Philip rejoiced, and he announced to the Dutch that, since the Prince of Orange had 'providentially' died, nothing stood now in the way of a reconciliation between Spain and the Netherlands. The position of the Netherlands seemed hopeless, the triumph of Spain certain.

[1] Gachard, *Correspondance de Guillaume*, vol. vi. 234.**

CHAPTER VII

FLANDERS AND BRABANT DECAY, AND THE NETHERLANDS ACQUIRE INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL, AND MARITIME SUPREMACY

'What constitutes a state?
Not high-raised battlements, or laboured mound,
Thick walls or moated gate,
Not cities proud, with spires and turrets crowned,
Not bays and broad-armed ports
Where, laughing at the storm, rich navies ride:
No;—men, high-minded men.'

SOPHOCLES, *Œdipus Tyrannus.*

Of vast consequence indeed is the dominion of the sea.'—Speech of Pericles, THUCYDIDES, book i.

'Navigare necesse est, vivere non necesse est.'—*Motto of Lübeck.*

'Whosoever commands the sea, commands the trade; whosoever commands the trade commands the riches of the world, and, consequently, the world itself.'—Sir WALTER RALEIGH, *A Discourse of the Invention of Ships.*

IN 1584, at the moment of the murder of William I., the position of the Netherlands was most serious. A host of more than 80,000 Spanish soldiers, led by an excellent commander, the Prince of Parma, were fighting for the King of Spain in the Netherlands, and the Dutch could hardly oppose 5,000 regular soldiers to this huge army. However, although the position of the Dutch seemed to be hopeless, the death of Prince William spread only consternation, not despair, through the Netherlands. His eldest son, who might have been his successor, was kept prisoner in Spain, as has already been mentioned; but his second son, Prince Maurice, who at the time of his father's death was but eighteen years old, had already distinguished himself by his ability and prudence, and he promised to become

a worthy successor to his father.[1] Therefore he was made Captain-General of the Netherlands, in succession to his father, notwithstanding his tender age, and the young Republic had no cause to regret its choice.

Towards the end of Prince William's life, the Spanish troops had been very active and very successful in the Belgian Netherlands, where the unwarlike and effeminate industrial population offered but a feeble and futile resistance. The celebrated industrial towns Ypres, Termonde, Ghent, Mechlin, Bruges, Brussels, and others rapidly fell into the hands of the Spanish troops. Many towns surrendered without resistance, sacrificing their civil and religious liberty in the vain hope of saving their wealth; but Antwerp, the greatest town in the Belgian Netherlands, refused to open its gates to Philip II. Therefore, the Spanish commander, the Prince of Parma, resolved to besiege it.

The town of Antwerp is situated on the Scheldt, a river which below Antwerp is several thousand feet wide, and which has a tide of eleven feet. As Antwerp was the strongest fortress in the Netherlands, and as the country round the town could easily be placed under water by piercing the dykes, Antwerp was considered to be impregnable by siege. Besides, its garrison was numerically stronger than the army which was about to besiege it.[2] It could only be taken either by surprise or by cutting its communication with the sea, and thus starving it into surrender.

Shortly before his death, Prince William had urged the people of Antwerp to pierce certain dykes which restrained the mighty river to a comparatively narrow channel, and flood the territory on both sides for a long distance, so that the Spaniards should not be able to approach the river itself and close it to shipping by means of a floating boom or a fortified bridge.[3] The commander and burgomaster of Antwerp, the celebrated Marnix de St. Aldegonde, endeavoured to carry out these instructions, but 'with William's death died all authority in Antwerp.'[4]

[1] Hooft, *Nederlandsche Historien*, book xxi. 927 **; Cerisier, *Histoire des Provinces Unies*, vol. iv. 5.*

[2] Strada, *De Bello Belgico*, 1632, Dec. II. vi.**

[3] *Archives d'Orange*, série i. vol. viii. 404.**

[4] Van Reyd, *Historie*, 1650, iv. 59*; Motley, *United Netherlands*, 1867, vol. i. 143.*

Unfortunately, Antwerp was ruled by a popular representative government, and the power to command was distributed between various boards which were principally occupied in arguing and in intriguing against each other and in ingeniously hampering each other's action. Division of power usually means destruction of power. In the words of a wise statesman, 'There is nothing more dangerous in a State than a number of administrative authorities possessing equal power.' [1]

Democracy is the most powerful solvent of military organisation. The latter is founded on discipline, the former on the negation of discipline. Co-operation and co-ordination are excellent, but co-ordination is impossible without subordination. If all want to command, none want to obey. Besides, popular government is based not on knowledge, but on ignorance; for the majority of people are always ill-instructed, and the uncritical masses may easily be led astray by misrepresentation, for 'the greater number are, on account of their natural dulness, easily imposed upon by gross error in the garb of reason.' [2] Hence the ambitious and unscrupulous leaders of democracy, who in their own interests habitually oppose a national government—a government by experts—have ever been an influence unfavourable to administrative, and especially to military, efficiency.

The opposition of faction leaders had not allowed the military authorities of Antwerp to take the necessary precautions in time, and had rendered Antwerp unfit for the offering of an adequate resistance. In Antwerp, as in other democracies, the activity of the military experts was directed, or rather misdirected, by the uncertain moods of a mob of party politicians ignorant of war. The amateur burgher statesmen of Antwerp quarrelled among themselves for the spoils of office, and, trying to thwart each other, neglected the interests of the community, as party politicians frequently do. 'In popular governments each man has a care of his particular interest and thinks basely of the common good. They look upon approaching mischiefs as they do upon thunder. Every man wishes it may not touch his own person.' [3]

No military man in Antwerp had sufficient authority to make

[1] Richelieu, *Testament Politique*, book i. chap. viii.
[2] Pufendorf, *Law of Nature*, book vii. chap i.
[3] Sir Robert Filmer, *Patriarcha*, 1680.

the necessary preparations for a siege in time of peace, as national interests were made subservient to individual and to party interests.* The building of a fort which was indispensable for the defence of the town could not be undertaken, because the military commander was overruled by some influential burghers who feared the depreciation of their property.[1] The dams which the Prince of Orange wished to have pierced were left intact, because that step was opposed by the noisy, and therefore influential, corporation of the butchers, who used to keep their cattle in the meadows which ought to have been put under water.[2]

During the progress of the siege the democratic and popular government of Antwerp, endeavouring to pursue a popular policy —that is, a policy which would please the ignorant and short-sighted masses—made blunder after blunder. The Spaniards had blockaded Antwerp. Countless Dutch blockade-runners brought large quantities of provisions into the town, and supplies sufficient to resist a siege of several years might easily have been obtained. However, the penny-wise civil commissariat authorities thought that the blockade-runners made too large a profit, and laid down an official scale of prices for food-stuffs brought in which effectually drove away the blockade-runners.[3] The penny-wisdom of the governing shopkeepers was to prove fatal to Antwerp.

In Antwerp the supremacy of the civil power over the military power, even in technical matters of war, was a fundamental maxim of State, and not only were the military forces subordinated to the civil authorities, but military considerations also had to give way to political—that is, to party political—considerations, a state of affairs which may have deplorable consequences, as all Anglo-Saxon States know. In theory, the supremacy of the civil over the military power is excellent, but only too often it causes, in practice, great disasters, because party politicians naturally work not so much for the welfare of the nation as for the benefit of their party and for their own benefit.[4] Democratic governments have many heads but no head,

[1] Gens, *Histoire d'Anvers*, 1861, 534 ff.

[2] Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book xix. chap. iii.*

[3] Motley, *United Netherlands*, 1867, vol. i. 159.*

[4] See 'Party Politicians' in Analytical Index.

many minds but no mind, many wills but no will. Therefore, nothing can be foreseen, nothing pre-arranged, all has to be left to chance. The subordination of military and national considerations to party political convenience, which caused the fall of Athens and of Carthage, also caused the fall of Antwerp.

As the Scheldt below Antwerp was 2,400 feet wide and over sixty feet deep at high water, nobody in Antwerp believed that it was possible to effectively close the river to shipping, and when the Spaniards set about constructing a stockade and a bridge across the Scheldt, the burghers laughed.[1] But the energetic Prince of Parma accomplished the seemingly impossible. He succeeded in building a strong and well-fortified bridge across the river, and in cutting off both the trade and the food supply of the town. Soon; employment ceased almost completely in the formerly busy city, the idle population was threatened with starvation, and became discontented and riotous. When it was too late, the burghers tried in vain to demolish the bridge and to destroy the dams which they might easily have cut at the time when the late Prince of Orange and the commander of the town had urged them to do so. Both attempts, which cost a great number of lives, were unsuccessful. 'The people, deluded by imaginary advantages, often seek their own destruction, and they can easily be misled by raising great hopes in them, and by giving them glowing assurances.'[2]

The fact that Antwerp was ruled, even in military matters, not by experts but by amateurs who obeyed the noisy and ill-informed multitude, and the fact that the multitude had been misled by agitators, caused its perdition. Antwerp, like ancient Carthage, possessed all that money could buy and ingenuity could suggest for the defence of the town. The fortifications of Antwerp were the finest in the world, and they were considered to be impregnable, but they availed little, because the hired soldiers were worthless. An important fort, Fort Liefkenshoek, occupied by 800 men, was carried by assault, and practically the whole garrison was slaughtered by the Spaniards, who lost only one man killed and two or three wounded.[3]

[1] Strada, *De Bello Belgico*, 1632, Dec. II. vi.**
[2] Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, book i. chap. liii.
[3] Bor, *Oorspronck*, 1621, xix. 14.**

The amateur administrators of Antwerp were better at speaking than at acting; the noisy town rabble were better at shouting than at fighting. Nothing had been foreseen, all was left to chance, all was muddle and confusion, and nobody in authority was responsible, because the politicians had, for their own advantage, divorced authority from responsibility. At last the unemployed workers of the town, who were unwilling to undergo privations, became restless and mutinous. 'The city was divided into factions, and the people would not endure the incommodity of the siege,'[1] says a contemporary writer, for they cared more for their ease than for their country. Riots occurred, the populace loudly clamoured for wages, food and peace at any price, and the popular, democratic and representative government of the town, obedient to the will of the short-sighted majority, yielded up the city without any real need, although assistance was coming from England and from Holland.

The consequences of that cowardly surrender were most far-reaching. Motley wrote of this pitiful and shameful transaction: 'The only hope for Antwerp and for the great commonwealth of all the Netherlands was in holding out even to the last gasp until England and Holland, now united, had time to relieve the city. Had Antwerp possessed the spirit of Leyden, had William of Orange been alive, the Spanish escutcheon might never again have been seen outside the wall of any Netherland edifice. Belgium would have become at once a constituent part of the Netherlands, instead of languishing until our own century the dependency of a distant and foreign metropolis. The Antwerpers were not disposed to make themselves martyrs.'[2] It will appear in due course that Motley's views as to the consequences which the fall of Antwerp had upon the Belgian Netherlands are correct.

The fate of Antwerp sealed the fate of the Belgian Netherlands. The Spaniards rapidly made themselves masters of the country. The people easily submitted to Spanish rule, and henceforth the Belgian Netherlands were called the Spanish Netherlands.

A paying policy, a policy which is directed solely by commercial considerations, a business policy, 'the policy of the shopkeeper,' as Adam Smith contemptuously called it, is not

[1] Strada, *De Bello Belgico*.**

[2] Motley, *United Netherlands*, 1867, vol. i. 253.*

always a profitable policy. The Belgian traders who, scouting a patriotic and national policy, had in haste surrendered their towns, eager to resume business without delay under the Spanish flag, discovered that the Spaniards 'made a solitude and called it peace' in that part of the Netherlands which submitted to their rule. Wherever the Spaniards planted their flag, they utterly extinguished the Reformed religion, closed the Protestant churches and independent schools, placed the education in the hands of religious orders, preferably of Jesuits, and drove all the Protestants across the frontier.[1] Besides, they drained the remaining wealth of the people out of the country by unbearably high requisitions and taxes, and their ill-disciplined soldiers looted, burned, robbed, and spoiled the property of the peaceful citizens with impunity wherever they went. Therefore, the whole Protestant population, and a large part of the impoverished Roman Catholic population too, streamed out of their desolated and ruined country and passed into the neighbouring Dutch Netherlands, especially into the provinces of Holland and Zeeland, which, owing to their maritime position, seemed safest from Spanish aggression. In 1585, 200,000 people left Flanders.[2]

The industrial and commercial supremacy of Flanders and Brabant became a thing of the past. The chief towns were almost depopulated. The inhabitants had, in a great measure, fallen victims to war, pestilence, and famine. Thousands of villages which had covered the face of the country were abandoned to the wolves, which had so rapidly increased that they attacked not only cattle and children, but grown-up persons. The dogs, driven abroad by hunger, had become as ferocious as other beasts of prey, and joined in large packs to hunt down animals and men. Neither fields nor woods nor roads were distinguishable by any visible limits. All was an entangled mass of trees, weeds, and grass. The prices of the necessaries of life were so high that people of rank, after selling everything to buy bread, were obliged to have recourse to open beggary in the streets of the great towns.[3] According to Cerisier, Flanders and Brabant fell a prey to the Spaniards because a restless

[1] Cerisier, *Histoire des Provinces Unies*, vol. iii. 537.*

[2] Engelmann, *Geschichte des Handels*, 1881, 158.

[3] Grattan, *History of the Netherlands*, chap. xiii.

democracy had been blinded and led astray by unscrupulous demagogues.[1]

In 1567, before the siege of Antwerp, and before the sack of that town described in the foregoing chapter, Ludovico Guicciardini had stated in his description of the Netherlands: 'It was no uncommon thing for 500 ships of all sizes to go and come to Antwerp in a single day, and 10,000 carts were employed in conveying merchandise to and from the neighbouring countries. Besides, hundreds of wagons daily came and went with passengers, and 500 coaches were used by people of distinction.'[2] Antwerp had been the world's storehouse, bank, stock-exchange, and clearing-house.[3] Now, the houses of Antwerp stood tenantless, grass grew in the streets, the harbour was deserted, the stock-exchange was empty.

While the war-seasoned Spanish troops had easily broken the half-hearted resistance of the great industrial towns of the Belgian Netherlands and of their hired troops, they met in the Dutch Netherlands with an unexpected and most stubborn opposition. In the Dutch Netherlands the people relied for their defence not merely on their wealth, those artificial defences which money can buy and the protection of hired troops, but on their own strength, and the Spanish endeavoured in vain to crush the determination of the ferocious Dutchmen who fought for their freedom as savagely as wild beasts fight for their young. The strongest armies and the ablest Spanish commanders were unable to conquer the Dutch Netherlands. In the words of a judicious English ambassador, who knew the Dutch well, the Netherlands were a country 'strong by its nature and seat among the waters that encompass and divide it, but more by a rougher sort of people, at that time less softened by trade or by riches, less used to grants of money and taxes, and proud of their ancient fame recorded in the Roman stories of being obstinate defenders of their liberties.'[4]

The resistance of the Dutch Netherlands to Spain was facilitated by the fact that the Spaniards found it difficult to operate in a country where they were constantly threatened by

[1] Cerisier, *Histoire des Provinces Unies*, vol. iv. 142.*

[2] MacCulloch, *Treatises and Essays*, 1859, 347.

[3] See page 95.

[4] Sir Wm. Temple, *United Provinces*, 1672, chap. i.**

inundations which the Dutch could produce at any moment by piercing the dykes, but the military successes of the Dutch were chiefly due to the fact that the excellent human material of the Netherlands could be rapidly transformed into an efficient and most patriotic national army. While the wealthy merchants of Flanders and Brabant shirked military service, fearing to soil their delicate hands, every able-bodied man in the Dutch Netherlands was liable to be called upon to serve at any moment in the national militia, as reference to the text of the Union of Utrecht given in the foregoing chapter[1] will show, and the people gladly fought for their country because 'their country was the god they worshipped,' as a contemporary writer tells us.[2] All men were trained to arms and provided with arms, and there had been years during this perpetual war with Spain in which one man out of three of the whole male population was ready to be mustered at any moment for the field. The Dutch citizens fought with the utmost courage and determination, and there is no doubt whatever that for discipline, experience, equipment, effectiveness of movement, and general organisation, the army of the Republic was the model army of Europe.[3]

This excellent army found a worthy commander in the youthful son of William Prince of Orange, for Prince Maurice proved perhaps the ablest general of the age.[4] He succeeded not only in repelling every attack which the Spaniards made upon the Dutch Netherlands from the Belgo-Spanish Netherlands, which they had conquered, but in transferring to them the seat of war. Thus, the unfortunate people of Flanders and Brabant, after having been defeated and plundered by the Spanish until they had foolishly submitted to King Philip in the hope of escaping further troubles, were still more impoverished by becoming the battle-ground between the Spaniards and the Dutch, for the armies of both nations lived on the unhappy country.

The Netherlands made war upon Spain on land and on water, and they soon drove the Spanish warships from the seas. The small but agile Dutch ships, manned by the most courageous

[1] See page 100.

[2] *A Brief Character of the Low Countries*, 1652, 26.

[3] Motley, *United Netherlands*, 1867, vol. iv. 563.

[4] *Mémoire de Frédéric Henri*, 1733, 31.*

sailors and commanded by the ablest captains of the time, proved terrible antagonists to the huge but clumsy Spanish galleons. It was recognised as being almost impossible to compel a war-vessel of the Republic to surrender. Hardly an instance of the submission of Dutch ships, even to a far superior force, can be found in the Dutch records, while they are filled with accounts of commanders who would rather blow up their ships than strike their flag.[1] By their naval skill and by their ferocious determination to conquer or to die, the Dutch defeated superior Spanish fleets wherever they met them. Dutch privateers, Sir William Temple informs us, hunted Spanish ships in every part of the world. 'They infested the seas, laid in wait for the Spanish plate fleets, and sometimes attempted their coasts in the New World, which was to touch Spain in the most sensible spot, and was a strong motive to their court to endeavour peace, in order to secure those treasures and preserve them in Spain.'[2]

On May 25, 1599, a fleet of some seventy ships left the Dutch shores, under the command of Pieter van der Does, with orders to destroy the Spanish fleet, which was being fitted out at Corunna, to plunder the ships coming from the Orient, and to harass the Spanish coasts. Van der Does succeeded in plundering the Spanish colonies on the coasts of Africa and of Brazil, and in capturing a considerable number of Spanish merchantmen. In 1606, another Dutch fleet of eighty ships was sent to the Spanish seas on a similar errand, and in 1607, a fleet of thirty ships was sent out under Jacob van Heemskerk. He fell upon the Spanish fleet at Gibraltar, and completely destroyed it, so that the merchant marine of Spain was left unprotected. Besides, the Dutch ships did much damage to the Spanish coast towns. Meanwhile, the Dutch East India Company conquered many Spanish colonies, and year after year numerous Spanish ships, laden with gold and silver and precious merchandise, were brought into the Dutch harbours.[3] Dutch merchants, shipowners, captains and seamen discovered that privateering against the Spaniards was a very profitable occupation.

The gigantic Spanish power, which had overthrown the

[1] Motley, *United Netherlands*, 1867, vol. iv. 563.*

[2] Sir Wm. Temple, *United Provinces*, 1672, chap. i.**

[3] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, i. 382.*

largest empires and vanquished the strongest armies, vainly endeavoured to subdue the Dutch by war, or to end the exhausting struggle by a peace favourable to Spain. The trickery of Spanish diplomats and the unscrupulousness of Philip II. proved equally unavailing. Embittered by their sufferings, the Dutch were determined to smash the power of Spain, partly in order to secure a lasting and advantageous peace, partly because they were aware that, in conquering Spain, they would conquer for themselves the rule of the sea, the world's commerce, a huge colonial empire and the world's wealth. Similar reasons prompted England, two hundred years later, to make war upon the French Republic and Napoleon I. during more than twenty years.

Through the determination of the Dutch, Philip II.'s ambitious plans to create a universal monarchy came to naught. Spain succeeded only in conquering Portugal in 1580. By this easy conquest Philip made himself for a fleeting moment the master of the whole colonial world. His wars with France and England proved disastrous, largely in consequence of the unrelenting attacks of the Dutch.

Queen Elizabeth was considered by her contemporaries to be the head and the protectress of the Protestant interest.[1] She had given aid to the Dutch and had allowed English privateers to prey upon Spanish shipping in the New World. Therefore, the King of Spain resolved to break the power of England, and he was aided in his attempt by the Roman Catholic Church. In 1570 Pope Pius V. had sent forth his celebrated 'Damnatio et Excommunicatio Elizabethæ, Reginæ Angliæ eique adhærentium,' by which the Queen was declared to be 'deprived of her pretended title to the kingdom and of all dominion, dignity and privilege whatsoever,' and the people of the kingdom were absolved of their oath of allegiance. The Queen's subjects were 'commanded and interdicted' not to obey her. Murderers were sent against the Queen as they had been sent against the Prince of Orange. Various plots to dispatch the great English Queen miscarried, through the watchfulness of Walsingham and his army of spies. In 1586 Sixtus V. had again laid an interdict on England, absolved the Queen's subjects of their oath of allegiance,

[1] Ward, *History of Law of Nations*, 1795, vol. ii. 470.

excommunicated the Queen, and urged King Philip to seize her kingdom. Thus encouraged, Philip resolved to subdue England by force of arms, and for the invasion of England he fitted out the greatest fleet which, until then, the world had seen. Miguel de Cervantes, who had not yet written his 'Don Quixote,' assisted, in the capacity of a humble clerk, in victualling the Invincible Armada.

When, in 1588, the Invincible Armada set out for England, the Prince of Parma collected in the Spanish Netherlands an army of 30,000 veterans, 400 flat-bottomed transports, and a number of warships to assist in the invasion; but his departure was prevented by the Dutch, who blockaded all the ports of the Spanish Netherlands, from Fort Lillo on the right bank of the Scheldt down to Dunkirk, and thus rendered to England an invaluable service. It is true that a large body of troops had been collected in England to resist an invasion, but these raw levies would probably have been unable to resist the war-worn Spanish veterans. But for the determination and skill of the Dutch, Alexander of Parma might have conquered England and Roman Catholicism might have conquered the world. Thus the Dutch fought for the liberty of England and of all Europe, and all Europe, and England especially, owes to the Dutch a great debt of gratitude.

In 1592 Lord Bacon wrote: 'The Low Countries, which were within the age of a young man, the richest, the best peopled and the best-built part of Europe, are in such estate as a country is like to be in that hath been the seat of thirty years war; and although the Dutch sea provinces be rather increased in wealth and shipping than otherwise, yet they cannot but mourn for their distraction from the rest of their body.'[1] It may be that the Dutch Netherlands 'mourned' for the downfall of Flanders and Brabant; but the Dutch merchants rejoiced because their downfall had made the Dutch Netherlands exceedingly prosperous.

While the great war between Spain and the Netherlands was going on, the material prosperity of the Dutch Netherlands had wonderfully increased. They had become the first commercial nation and the first maritime Power in the

[1] Bacon, *Observations on a Libel*, 1592.

world. During the twenty years from 1589 to 1609 the population of Amsterdam had increased from 70,000 to 130,000, and was destined to be again more than doubled during the ensuing decade.[1] On the other hand, the population of Antwerp had sunk almost as rapidly as that of its rival had increased, having lessened by 50,000 during the same period.

The wealth of Bruges had gone to Antwerp, as has been shown in Chapter V.,[2] and the wealth of Antwerp had gone to Amsterdam, to which town it was attracted by the wise and energetic economic policy of the Dutch, for the Dutchmen of that time did not yet follow the comfortable policy of laissez-faire as did those of later generations,[3] but an energetic and far-seeing policy of action, of protection and encouragement.

While Antwerp, lying on a very deep river, possessed a splendid, easily approachable and most commodious natural harbour, Amsterdam was, in the words of Sir William Temple, 'a very incommodious haven, being seated upon such shallow waters that ordinary ships cannot come up to it, without the advantage of tides, nor great ones without unloading, the entrance of the Texel and the passage over the Zuyder Zee lying all in blind and narrow channels, being more dangerous than a voyage to Spain.' 'Therefore,' Sir William Temple observed, 'it is evident it is not a haven that draws trade, but trade that fills a haven and brings it into vogue.'[4] Now let us see how the rulers of Amsterdam 'drew' the trade of Flanders and Brabant into their incommodious harbour, and how they 'brought it into vogue.'

The government of Amsterdam had endeavoured from the earliest times to improve by art the naturally unfavourable position of its port and to make it more convenient for shipping. With this object in view, elaborate and costly improvements were effected. Channels were dug towards the sea, excavations were made to provide deep water in the harbour, warehouses were erected, and an excellent service of pilots, sea-signs and light-houses, which became a model to the world, was instituted. As early as 1452 Amsterdam received permission to levy increased duties to defray the expenses of the great harbour

[1] Motley, *United Netherlands*, 1867, vol. iv. 551.*
[2] See page 65.
[3] See Chap. XX. of this work.
[4] Sir Wm. Temple, *United Provinces*, 1672, chap. vi.**

works.[1] Although Amsterdam was the worst situated among the Dutch ports, it acquired a great superiority in trade and captured the trade of Antwerp owing to the policy pursued by its government, which sought to stimulate and attract trade in every possible way, and foster not merely some favoured industry or other, but to promote simultaneously all branches of commerce. This far-seeing and liberal policy, beneficial for all producers and traders, was the cause of Amsterdam's greatness.[2]

It may at first sight appear astonishing that the merchants who fled from Antwerp, which was the most convenient harbour on the continent of Europe, should emigrate to Amsterdam; for England was, by her geographical position and her matchless harbours, best fitted for transacting a great international trade. However, England followed at the time a narrow-minded commercial policy which she had copied from the Venetians and which compared very unfavourably with the enlightened commercial policy of the Dutch. Foreign merchants and manufacturers who settled in England were, like foreigners who settled in Venice, compelled to pay various heavy taxes from which the natives were free.[3] Besides, foreigners were excluded from all the industrial and trading associations and were not allowed to work either as partners or masters, except at trades which were new to the country. Therefore, hardly any of the emigrants from the Belgian Netherlands, except those who made serge, damask, stockings, &c., went to England.[4] 'Wisdom is better than strength.' A wise commercial policy often proves stronger than great natural advantages. Therefore the trade of Flanders and Brabant went not to England but to Holland.

In consequence of the enormous influx of refugees from the Spanish Netherlands and from other countries where the Protestants were persecuted, the population of the Dutch provinces rapidly increased, and in 1609 it amounted to 3,500,000.[5] 'That population was about equal to that of England at the same period, but the Netherlands were richer than was England. Nowhere in the world was so large a production in proportion to

[1] *Richesse de la Hollands*, 1778, i. 392.* [2] *Ibid.* 391.*
[3] Daru, *Histoire de Venise*, book xix.
[4] Huet, *A View of the Dutch Trade*, 1722.
[5] Zimmermann, *Kolonial Politik der Niederländer*, 1896.

the number of the people. Nowhere were so few unproductive consumers. Everyone was at work. Vagabonds, idlers and loafers, such as must be in every community, were caught up by the authorities and made to earn their bread by work.'[1]

The liberal reception of emigrants from all countries was an excellent policy at a time when industrial nations were foolish enough to drive their best citizens out of the country. Since then industrial nations have become wiser, for now they drive out only undesirables and criminals, and not the best workers, but only the worst, can be obtained by opening the frontiers without discrimination to all refugees.

By Article 13 of the Treaty of Union, toleration was established as one of the fundamental laws of the Dutch Republic,[2] but toleration was not indiscriminately applied. Toleration was with the Dutch a policy, not an abstract principle. Therefore, they did not tolerate the existence of Roman Catholic convents and monasteries, which served as barracks for an enormous army of unproductive monks and nuns, and which, similar to our workhouses, were used as temporary shelters by an enormous army of loafers and of professional paupers and beggars. The suppression of the convents in 1583 led immediately to a great increase of the industrial population, of the productive power, and of the industrial wealth of the Netherlands.[3] The economic policy of the Dutch favoured in the early years of the Republic the hard-working producer of wealth, not the unproductive consumer—during the period of decadence the consumer was favoured[4]—and their charitable institutions did not tend to pauperise the masses.

In all important matters the Dutch Government took the opinion of merchants and other business men before acting,[5] and the Dutch statesmen endeavoured in their foreign policy to promote the commercial advantage of the citizens. At that time, all nations endeavoured to reserve the most profitable trade for their own citizens, exactly as they do in the present century. In order to capture that trade, the Dutch merchant-statesmen had

[1] Motley, *United Netherlands*, 1867, vol. iv. 556.*

[2] See page 100. [3] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 472.*

[4] See Chap. XX. of this work.

[5] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 515.*

made freedom of trade and equality of opportunity the fundamental maxim of their economic policy.

Although the Dutch were determined champions of the policy of free trade in all cases in which free trade was profitable to themselves, free trade, like toleration, was not to them an abstract principle, but merely a policy, a means to an end, which was applied in accordance with the requirements of each individual case. Therefore, although the Dutch fought for free trade in order to capture the trade of foreign nations, they did not mean to give unrestricted freedom of trade to other nations in their own trading sphere, but reserved for themselves valuable trading privileges wherever and whenever possible. Sometimes such privileges were obtained by force of arms, sometimes they were the price of Dutch political support. The Dutch helped the northern Powers against the Hanseatic towns, for instance, because the latter were the greatest competitors of the Dutch in the northern trade, and because the Dutch wished to obtain for themselves that privileged position in the markets of Denmark, Sweden and Muscovy which had been formerly held by the Hanseatic League.

Most of the Dutch wars were waged for commercial purposes, and nearly all their wars were closed by a commercial treaty by which the Netherlands strove to secure preferential treatment, not freedom of trade, for themselves. 'The advantages and privileges secured by these treaties, together with their extreme economy, frugality and industry, enabled the Dutch to undersell their competitors, and to obtain a monopoly in trade; and to these the Dutch owed the prominent position which they occupied in trade.'[1]

The manufacturing industries of the Netherlands, like those of Great Britain, were not native to the country. The inhabitants of Brabant and Flanders who emigrated from their ruined towns were poor in the world's goods, and the vast majority were starving paupers; but the penniless refugees carried with them much invisible wealth, their knowledge of commerce, their experience of manufacturing, their industry and their world-wide trading connections. A list of customers is often an exceedingly valuable commercial asset. The government of the town of

[1] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 405.*

Amsterdam, which was most enterprising and which was always ready to foster and encourage commerce and industry, immediately took steps to attract these ruined people to the town by offering them substantial advantages in kind and in money. For instance, in 1614, weavers willing to establish their trade in Amsterdam were offered fifty florins for every loom erected, and 200 florins for every artisan. These sums were to be repaid in four years.[1] Other Dutch towns acted in a similar manner.

Trade and commerce were not only fostered and protected, but also honoured by the Dutch governments. As early as the fourteenth century wardens were appointed by the magistrates of Amsterdam to examine the cloth made and to publicly bestow prizes on the best weavers. Similar honours were given for the encouragement of industry almost everywhere in the Netherlands.[2]

Through her numerous wars, and especially through her seemingly unending war with the Dutch, Spain had incurred such enormous expenses that her finances fell into the greatest disorder. A crippling taxation destroyed her agriculture and her manufacturing industries. Notwithstanding her exceedingly fruitful soil Spain had to be fed with foreign grain. The fields went out of cultivation because the government, desiring to benefit the trader, had crippled the producer.[3] Spain, after having been one of the wealthiest, became one of the poorest, countries in Europe, to the great advantage of the Dutch, who thus lost a powerful competitor for the supply of the Indies with manufactured articles.[4] The frequently-heard assertion that peace is the greatest interest of every commercial nation is nonsense.

Before the Spanish war, the manufacturing industries of the Netherlands were comparatively insignificant. Through the decline of Brabant, Flanders and Spain, the Dutch Netherlands became the greatest industrial nation in Europe, and, to use Mr. Cobden's graphic expression, the 'workshop of the world.' Owing to the spirit of persecution which raged abroad, the industries of all Europe passed into the Netherlands,[5] and they

[1] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 71.*
[2] *Ibid.* 393.*
[3] Naudé, *Getreidehandelspolitik*, 1896, 185.*
[4] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, i. 495.*
[5] *Ibid.* 72.*

were brought to the highest degree of perfection by the industry and inventiveness of individual Dutchmen, and by the stimulating activity of the Dutch Government. 'The Venetian workers confessed themselves equalled, if not outdone, by the crystal-workers and sugar-refiners of the Northern Republic. The tapestries of Arras—the name of which Walloon city had become a household word of luxury in all modern languages—were now transplanted to the soil of freedom more congenial to the advancement of art. Brocades of the precious metals, splendid satins and velvets, serge and homely costumes, laces of thread and silk, the finer and coarser manufactures of clay and porcelain, iron, steel, and all useful fabrics for the building and outfitting of ships, substantial broadcloths manufactured of wool imported from Scotland—all this was but a portion of the industrial production of the united provinces.'[1]

The foreign commerce of the Dutch, which was considerable before the outbreak of the war with Spain, increased very substantially in consequence of the war. Spain had made war not only upon the Netherlands, but upon France and England as well, and France and England, desirous of assisting the Dutch in every way, not only sent them men and money, but also endeavoured to strengthen them economically by the conclusion of exceedingly favourable commercial treaties. Henry IV. of France, for instance, gave permission to the Dutch to navigate, trade and traffic in all French lands, with the same freedom and the same privileges which all Frenchmen enjoyed. France threw down her customs barriers for the benefit of the Dutch, but to the great harm of the French, for the Dutch could manufacture more cheaply than the French. Hence the French manufacturers were unable to compete with the Dutch manufacturers and had to leave the field. The treaty of October 31, 1596, which gave to the Dutch free trade in France,[2] killed French commerce because, in Bismarck's words: 'Free trade is the weapon of the strongest,' and the Dutch were commercially the strongest. The most valuable concession of free trade which the Dutch had received by the treaty of 1596, and which was confirmed in the treaties of 1608, 1609, 1624, 1630, 1635, 1636,

[1] Motley, *United Netherlands*, 1867, vol. iv. 552.*

[2] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 166.*

1643, 1644 and 1647[1] was given to them for political reasons; and for political reasons it was withdrawn in 1648, as will appear in another chapter.[2]

Up to the outbreak of the war with Spain, the Dutch had ventured but rarely into the Mediterranean, and had concentrated their efforts upon the trade of northern Europe, but their growing prosperity encouraged them to extend their commercial operations. In 1591, for instance, 400 Dutch ships, freighted with grain from the Baltic, went to Italy, which suffered from a great scarcity, and during the ensuing years the commerce with Italy became very active and brought much wealth to the Netherlands. In 1596, a Venetian nobleman received permission from the States-General to export a large quantity of grain from Holland to Venice and regular trade relations with the great trading Republic of the Mediterranean were established. Whole fleets of Dutch ships could be seen in the harbour of Venice.[3] Formerly, the Hanse towns had carried on a flourishing trade with the Mediterranean ports in grain from the Baltic and other northern products, but the Dutch 'wormed the Hamburgers out of the Mediterranean trade,' as the historian of the Hanseatic League puts it, and extended their trade with the countries bordering on the Mediterranean in every direction.[4]

The Dutch were rapidly becoming the greatest traders of the universe. Soon their commerce embraced all[5] countries. In 1609, the King of Morocco sent an embassy to Holland for the conclusion of a commercial treaty.[5] In 1612 the States-General concluded a treaty of amity and commerce with Turkey,[6] which gave to the Dutch freedom of trade throughout the Turkish dominions, and as the Turks then possessed practically all the borders of the Black Sea and the southern coasts of the Mediterranean, the Dutch could boast that their trading empire was larger in extent than that of ancient Rome when it was at the height of its power. In 1609, the Dutch concluded a

[1] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 166.*
[2] See page 218.
[3] Naudé, *Getreidehandelspolitik*, 1896, 331.*
[4] Werdenhagen, *De Rebus Publicis*, 1631, ii. 6, 19.
[5] Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book xxxvii. chap. i.*
[6] Hammer, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches*, 1844, book xliii.

commercial treaty with Japan.[1] The Dutch became the merchants of the world.

The war with Spain had given the Dutch some political cohesion and some sense of nationality. It had given them the most flourishing manufacturing industries and a vast extension of their general commerce. It had given them the coveted trade with the Orient, which had created the great wealth of Venice, and which, after the discovery of the sea passage to India by Vasco da Gama, had enriched Lisbon. It had also given them the wealth of both Indies and of the Spice Islands.

When the war with Spain broke out, the Netherlands could trade in Oriental produce only by buying spices, drugs, silks, &c. at high prices in Portugal. They used to bring to Portugal grain and material for shipbuilding from the Baltic shores, manufactures, &c., and to fetch thence the merchandise of the Indies, for which Lisbon was the sole market and storehouse.[2] The Netherlands and the other nations of Europe were allowed by Spain and Portugal no share whatever in the direct trade with Asia, America, and Africa, and as the Dutch had to compete with the merchants of Antwerp and the Hanseatic merchants in buying Oriental and other colonial goods in Lisbon,[3] their profit was comparatively small.

When in 1580 Philip II. had conquered Portugal, one of his first measures was to prohibit the intercourse between Lisbon and his rebellious subjects in the Low Countries.[4] However, the Dutch continued trading with Lisbon under foreign flags, and the Spanish Government thought it prudent not to interfere.[5]

In 1598, King Philip II. died, and his son Philip III., who was determined to continue vigorously the struggle with the Netherlands, came to the throne. New brooms sweep clean. Philip III., wishing to cripple the resources of the Dutch, determined to destroy the trade of the Netherlands in colonial merchandise, and excluded the Dutch trade from all his dominions,[6] acting in the same way as did Napoleon I. in his

[1] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 226.* [2] *Ibid.* vol. i. 78.*
[3] *Ibid.* vol. i. 44.* [4] MacCulloch, *Treatises and Essays*, 1859, 348.
[5] Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book xxxiii. chap. xv.*
[6] Bor, *Oorspronck*, 1621, book xxxvi. 6 ff.**

struggle with England. Philip's prohibition gave a mighty impetus to the trade of the Dutch, similar to that which Napoleon's enactment gave to English trade two hundred years later. The English Government, which ruled the sea in Napoleon's time, responded to the Berlin decree by forbidding all nations to trade by sea with France. Similarly the Dutch, who ruled the sea three centuries ago, forbade in 1599 all nations to trade with Spain.[1] There is much resemblance between England's war with Napoleon and the Netherlands war with Spain.

Napoleon's attempt at closing the Continental markets against Great Britain not only miscarried, but directly led to an immense extension of British commerce and of British sea-power. In fact, it may be said that Napoleon, by his prohibition of trading, gave to Great Britain the monopoly of the world's trade, exactly as Philip III. had given the monopoly of the world's trade to the Netherlands. The Dutch, being unable to buy the products of the Orient second-hand in Lisbon and the Spanish harbours any longer, were forced to buy them first-hand in the countries whence the Spanish and Portuguese fetched them.

The great colonial trade of the Netherlands and the vast colonial empire of the Dutch arose from very humble beginnings. Cornelius and Frederick Houtman, sons of a brewer from Gouda, had gone to Lisbon in order to learn all that was worth learning with regard to the India trade. In 1594 Cornelius Houtman returned to Amsterdam, where he persuaded several merchants to entrust him with four vessels. With these he left Holland in April 1595, and, following the Portuguese trade route, sailed round the Cape of Good Hope. The expedition proved fruitless, and Houtman returned to Holland in August 1597 with only three vessels,[2] but the Dutch merchants did not lose courage. They formed a small company, and sent in 1598 a larger expedition to the Indies under the command of Jacob Corneliszoon van Nek. Eight ships took part in the second enterprise, and the States of Holland, who willingly gave encouragement and financial assistance to any promising commercial or industrial

[1] Cerisier, *Histoire des Provinces-Unies*, vol. iv. 455.*

[2] C. Houtman, 'Reise nach Ostindien,' in Schwabe, *Historie*, 1747–74; De Jonge, *Opkomst*, 1862.

venture, furnished the squadron with cannon and other supplies.[1] Four of these ships returned after fifteen months, and brought, among other merchandise, eight hundred tons of pepper and two hundred tons of cloves from Bantam. The other ships pushed on as far as Amboyna, Banda, and Ternate, and came back in 1600.[2]

Other towns were as enterprising as was Amsterdam. In 1598 some merchants from Zeeland and Rotterdam joined with several others, and equipped four ships which, under the command of Jacob Mahu, sailed towards the Moluccas, *via* the Magellan Straits, and this expedition was followed by various others.[3] The States of Holland assisted in these enterprises also by equipping the ships with cannon, munition of war, &c. These small and tentative expeditions proved sometimes exceedingly profitable, and created among the Dutch the desire to develop the India trade. As the native rulers, at the instigation of the Portuguese, attacked the Dutch, it was necessary to take precautions against Spanish-Portuguese hostilities. Therefore ships going to the Indies were commissioned in the name and under the seal of Prince Maurice, and were ordered to use force against all who should try to obstruct their trade and navigation.[4] By 1601 sixty-five ships had gone to India.[5]

The Dutch trade in the Indies rapidly increased, and the growth of that trade was noticed with concern and anxiety by the Court of Spain. Therefore Don Andreas Hurtado de Mendoza, who commanded a Spanish squadron in the Indies, was in 1601 ordered by Philip III. to destroy all Dutch merchantmen, and to treat as enemies all the native princes who traded with the Dutch. Hurtado sailed at the beginning of 1602 towards Bantam, where the Dutch did a considerable trade. He attacked five Dutch vessels, under the command of Wolfert Hermanszoon, but the Spanish were forced to retreat, with the loss of two ships. They revenged themselves by destroying the Dutch trading stations in Amboyna and cutting down the spice trees.[6]

[1] Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book xxxiv. chap. i.*

[2] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 50.*

[3] Meteren, *Histoire des Pays Bas*, 1618, xxiii. 496.**

[4] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol i. 51.*

[5] *Handwörterbuch der Staatswissenschaften*, 1898, vol. v. 1032.

[6] Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book xxxiv. chap. iii.*

The victorious Hermanszoon went to Banda, where the best nutmegs grow, and concluded a treaty with the natives, whereby the monopoly of the spice trade was reserved to the Dutch. The natives were to prevent the Portuguese from entering the island, and in return were promised peace and absolute liberty with regard to religious matters. The latter stipulations were most welcome to the people, who had been forced to embrace the Christian religion by the Spaniards and Portuguese, and who had been frequently cruelly persecuted for refusing to do so.[1]

This treaty of Hermanszoon is most noteworthy and interesting, first, because it is the first treaty which was concluded by the Dutch in those regions; secondly, because it shows that the Dutch, though nominally fighting for free trade, really fought for a trading monopoly wherever they went; thirdly, because by that treaty the foundation-stone of the Netherlands' Indian Empire was laid.

The accident of war not only gave to the Dutch their vast colonies, but also shaped their colonial policy. The Spaniards and Portuguese had made themselves hated by the natives by forcing them to become Christians. The Dutch, in snatching the Spanish and Portuguese colonies, followed the opposite policy and adopted a régime of extreme toleration. Circumstances, not philanthropy, caused the Dutch to be tolerant at home and abroad. Toleration, liberality, and humanity were likely to win the natives, and to make them faithful supporters of the Dutch. Hence the utmost toleration and liberality became the settled policy of the Dutch wherever their interests were likely to come into collision with those of Spaniards and Portuguese. The Banda treaty was soon followed by similar treaties with other native rulers.[2]

During several years the India trade was carried on by means of individual expeditions, and it proved sometimes very profitable, sometimes very unprofitable. Often it happened that ships which were sent out by enterprising individuals, or by small trading associations, found that they had been forestalled by Dutch merchants, who had taken off the whole of the supply of spices. Besides, the prices of spices in the Netherlands fluctuated in the

[1] Meteren, *Histoire des Pays Bas*, 1618, xxv. 540 f.**

[2] Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book xxxiv. chap. iii.*

most erratic manner. Sometimes there was a great scarcity of spices, which could be obtained only at famine prices; sometimes there was such abundance that they could not be sold except at a loss. For these reasons it was thought desirable to replace unrestricted competition by organised co-operation, and to give the whole Indian trade to one powerful company, which would organise a steady, regular, and continuous flow of supplies, and which, at the same time, would have sufficient power to protect itself unaided by the State against the attacks of the Spanish and Portuguese.[1] Guided by these considerations, the States-General of the United Netherlands resolved, in 1602, to amalgamate all the individual traders, and to found a great privileged company, which, during twenty-one years, should have the exclusive right to trade with the Indies, *via* the Cape of Good Hope and the Magellan Straits. The charter given to that company was dated April 20, 1602. Its capital amounted to 6,459,840 florins.[2]

The organisation of this important company was as follows: six boards were created, representing Amsterdam, Zeeland, Delft, Rotterdam, Hoorn, and Enkhuizen. The board of Amsterdam, being the wealthiest, took a half interest in the company, that of Zeeland a quarter interest, and the remaining four boards one-sixteenth interest each. The number of directors was to be twenty for Amsterdam, twelve for Zeeland, and seven for each of the remaining four Chambers, or sixty directors in all. The States reserved to themselves some control over this great company, for it was stipulated that, in case of the death of one of the directors, the other directors should propose three persons for the vacancy. Out of these three the States were to select one. Each of the participants was to put at least 6,000 florins into the company, excepting Hoorn and Enkhuizen, for which the minimum was fixed at 3,000 florins. A central board representing all the local boards was likewise created. It consisted of seventeen directors, of whom Amsterdam was to appoint eight, Zeeland four, and the remaining boards two, or sixteen in all, while the seventeenth was to be appointed in turn by Zeeland, Rotterdam, and Enkhuizen. The general meeting was to be held sometimes in Amsterdam and sometimes in Zeeland.

[1] Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book xxxiv. chap. iii.*

[2] Valentyn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën*, 1724.**

The company was empowered to conclude treaties and alliances with Indian potentates in the name of the States-General or of 'the sovereign' of the United Netherlands, to build forts, to keep an army and to appoint officers, under the condition that officers and soldiers should render the oath of allegiance to the States, or to the sovereign of the Netherlands, and to the country. The States were not permitted to make use of the ships, the artillery, and other property of the company, for the service of the republic, except with the consent of the company, and the directors were not responsible, either in their means or in their persons, for the debts of the company. The commanders of the company's fleets were bound to report to the States on the situation in the Indies. The capital of the company was contributed by the various participants as follows:—

Amsterdam	Fl. 3,674,915
Zeeland	1,333,882
Delft	470,000
Rotterdam	177,400
Hoorn	266,868
Enkhuizen	536,775
	Fl. 6,459,840[1]

The administration of the immense colonial empire, which was many times larger than the Netherlands, required, in view of the enormous distances which separated the motherland from the colonies, a simple and efficient organisation, but unfortunately the administration of the East India Company was similar to the ill-organised administration of the republic. The political division of the Netherlands, and local jealousies, had made necessary the creation of six local boards of directors, which resembled the States Provincial. These six local boards were loosely united by a central board of seventeen directors, which resembled the States-General. This organisation was most unsatisfactory, and caused local interests to prevail over the interests of the generality. Each town interested in the India trade strove through its local board to work for its own benefit, and if the India trade had not been so enormously profitable, the company

[1] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, i. 55.*

would have been ruined by its display, waste, and bad organisation. The company soon became a state within a state, which looked after its own interest and paid little heed to the interests of the nation.[1]

The constitution of the United Netherlands and that of the East India Company possessed the same peculiarities. Both suffered from the preponderance of local and individual interests over the interests of the generality. In both a strong central authority, able to direct affairs, to enforce order, to assign responsibilities and to exercise control was lacking. In this connection it is worth while observing that economic organisations, such as companies with limited liability, bear as a rule a curious resemblance to the political organisation of the States in which they are founded.

In Anglo-Saxon countries where party government prevails, the sovereign people has no real influence over the government. Politicians obtain power not because of their ability to administer and direct, but because of their ability to speak; they are amateurs in administrative business, and they administer the country without any real responsibility, not so much for the benefit of the nation as for the advantage of their party. The cabinets, being composed of amateurs, jealously exclude the experts from influence, often suppress their statements and timely warnings, or give to Parliament and the public a garbled version of the expert advice they have received. They take decisions behind closed doors, disallow the keeping of minutes of cabinet councils, and insist on the joint responsibility of ministers and the secrecy of procedure, so that, in case of a disaster, the real culprit can neither be discovered nor punished. Hence no one is responsible. 'The responsibility of each minister is now sheltered behind the screen of the cabinet. If the official conduct of a minister becomes the subject of animadversion in Parliament, the united cabinet defend their colleague and claim to share his responsibility. The whole political party then rush to the rescue of the government, and although, in private, they may blame the minister as a blunderer or jobber, in public they absolve him from all censure, and even lavish eulogies on his many virtues.'[2]

[1] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, 481.*

[2] Duke of Somerset, *Monarchy and Democracy*, 1880, 159.

Collective responsibility is merely a convenient fiction. Collective responsibility means irresponsibility. 'Genuine responsibility can be sought only in an individual minister, but not in an anonymous board subject to majority voting,'[1] 'for afterwards everyone is entitled to say that he voted against his conviction with the majority for the sake of unanimity, and no one knows who is responsible for what has been resolved.'[2]

The Act of Settlement of 1700 laid down that 'all resolutions taken by the Privy Council shall be signed by such of the Privy Council as shall advise and consent to the same.' In 1700 the Privy Council was the highest authority in England, and occupied a position similar to that held at present by the cabinet. By the foregoing regulation real personal responsibility for governmental action was established, but that excellent regulation was repealed in 1706 because the politicians in power preferred irresponsibility to responsibility for their actions. Responsibility has been divorced from authority and an English cabinet, sheltered by its 'collective' responsibility and the inviolable secrecy of proceedings, is in reality as irresponsible as the Czar of Russia, who claims to be responsible only to God. This is not a desirable state of affairs—except for the irresponsible politicians in power.

The companies founded in Anglo-Saxon countries also are usually administered by amateur directors, who act nominally in the interests of the shareholders, but really in their own interests or in the interests of some wire-puller. The shareholders, though they are theoretically supreme, are as a rule powerless to enforce their will on the administration of companies. The directors, constantly guided by lawyers experienced in circumventing the company laws, are only nominally, but not really, responsible for their actions; waste, muddle, deception, and dishonesty are common in public companies, and the defrauded public has no redress.

In Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, and Norway, on the other hand, we find, generally speaking, government by experts, an efficient governmental organisation and real personal, not collective, responsibility of the administrators both in national and local affairs. In these countries we also find ability, honesty,

[1] Bismarck, *Gedanken und Erinnerungen*, chap. xii.
[2] Bismarck, Speech, Dec. 1, 1874.

and full responsibility in the direction of public companies, which are administered, not by ornamental boards of amateurs, but by business men. Prevention is better than cure; example is better than precept. In well-administered States the government sets a good example and enforces it.

The original stock of the East India Company was equal to about £600,000 in English money. The company was established by the Government, it was given almost sovereign authority, and it was constantly supported and aided by the Government. Its directors were the best and ablest heads of the country, and the company applied a large part of the large profits to improving and strengthening its position. A contemporary writer says of the East India Company: 'They were encouraged to enlarge their stock and to forego immediate gain in the hope of future advantage, for they are all the while improving a sure inheritance and not laying out money to better a disputable or a precarious item. Their interest stands on as good a basis as that of the Government itself, and upon this foundation they have expended many millions to advance and perpetuate their interests in the Indies.'[1] Through the wise initiative and assistance of the Government and through the conservative policy followed by the directors, under the guidance of the Dutch Government, the Netherlands East India Company became great and prosperous notwithstanding its bad organisation.

While the Netherlands were successfully fighting Spain in Europe on land and sea, hundreds of Dutch ships, fitted both for commerce and war, and having a considerable number of soldiers on board, made war upon the trade and possessions of Spain and Portugal. Amboyna and the Moluccas were first wrested from the Portuguese; other islands followed, and through the possession of these the Dutch obtained the monopoly of the spice trade. Then the Dutch established factories and fortifications from Bussorah at the mouth of the Tigris, in the Persian Gulf, along the coasts and islands of India as far as Japan.[2] Wherever Dutch ships sailed, they found Dutch harbours where they could take in provisions and refit. The world was dotted with Dutch harbours, as it is now with British coaling stations. Batavia, in

[1] *Discourses on Public Revenues*, 1696, 142.

[2] MacCulloch, *Treatises and Essays*, 1859, 349.

the large and fertile island of Java, the greater part of which the Dutch had conquered, formed the centre of their Indian commerce and their Indian empire.

By trading and by preying on the possessions and the trade of Spain and Portugal, the progress and the power of the East India Company became so great that, within the first six years of its existence, its capital increased in value from six millions to more than thirty millions, and notwithstanding its very conservative policy the company was able to distribute enormous dividends to the shareholders. In the first year of its existence the company distributed 75 per cent. to the proprietors, and distributions of 40, 50 and more per cent. per annum were common. The Dutch East India Company was at the same time an important economic factor and a great military force. Towards the end of 1609 the company possessed about fifty well-armed vessels, and was able to place 30,000 soldiers in the field.[1]

America also was exploited and colonised by the Dutch. As early as 1581 an Englishman had proposed to the Dutch to open America for them if he was given five ships of war, but that offer had not been accepted. However, sixteen years later, in 1597, Gerrard Bikker of Amsterdam and Jan Corneliszoon Leyen of Enkhuizen formed a small company for the American trade,[2] and the Dutch became a great American power, in spite of the opposition of Spain and Portugal. In 1609, Henry Hudson, an English sailor, who was in the service of the mighty Dutch East India Company, trying to find the North-West passage to China, discovered the Hudson Bay and River, which were named after him.[3] The Dutch occupied the district between the Hudson and the Delaware Rivers, and founded in 1614 New Amsterdam,[4] which, when conquered by the English, was re-named New York.

Australia, formerly named New Holland, was discovered and explored by Hertoge, Zeachen, Van Edels, Van Nuyts, De Witt. Tasmania and New Zealand, formerly spelt Nieuw Zeeland, were discovered by Abel Janszoon Tasman.

[1] Neuville, *Histoire de la Hollande*, 1703, vol. i. 13.*
[2] Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book xxxiv. chap. v.*
[3] Meteren, *Histoire des Pays-Bas*, xxxi. 674 f.**
[4] *Handwörterbuch der Staatswissenschaften*, 1898, vol. v. 173.

The African trade also was opened by the Dutch. As early as 1609, the Dutch were supposed to employ 120 ships in the African trade. Recognising the strategical importance of the Cape of Good Hope, which had been strangely neglected by the Portuguese, the Dutch planted a colony at Kaap de Goede Hoop, as it was then called, with Cape Town for its centre.

Thus, the Dutch became a world-empire of the first rank, and, in their time, they held a position similar to that which is held by the British Empire at the present day.

The men of the young republic thought that their mighty colonial empire would remain theirs for ever, and it might have done so. Had the Dutch followed a vigorous national policy and had they been united, the New World might, and probably would, have become Dutch instead of Anglo-Saxon. 'In the earlier part of the seventeenth century there seemed to be every prospect that Holland would soon attain an undisputed position as the predominant Power, not only in European waters, but in the East and West Indies as well.' [1]

The acquisition of their colonial empire had the happiest effect on the European commerce of the Netherlands. Before the Dutch had become a great colonial Power, Holland had become the chief storehouse of food in Europe. 'Amsterdam,' Sir Walter Raleigh wrote in 1603, 'is never without 700,000 quarters of corn, none of it the growth of the country. A dearth of only one year enriches Holland for seven years.' [2] At that time the Dutch traded chiefly in herrings and other preserved fish, in grain, in wood and all other materials used in shipbuilding, in wines, spirits, drugs, dried fruit, iron, copper, arms and ammunition of war.[3] When the Dutch made themselves masters of most of the colonies and ports of the Portuguese, Holland became, in Sir William Temple's words, also 'the great magazine of all the commodities of the eastern regions.' The wealth of both hemispheres became concentrated in Amsterdam. The Netherlands, after having been the chief market and storehouse of Europe, became the world's storehouse and produce-exchange.

[1] Cunningham, *Western Civilization*, 1898, vol. ii. 196.

[2] Raleigh, *Observations Touching Trade with the Hollanders*, 1603.**

[3] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 44.*

Through their possessions and settlements in all parts of the world, the Dutch were able to supply directly the nations of the north of Europe with the merchandise which they brought from India, America, and the Levant, and, as the Dutch had reserved to themselves the monopoly of the spice trade and various other trades, none but the Dutch could buy and sell first-hand. Other countries had to buy second-hand from Dutch or other middlemen, and were, therefore, unable to compete with the Netherlands in international trade. Thus the Dutch acquired supremacy in the world's trade.[1]

The enormous extension of their trade led to a corresponding increase of their shipping, and the marine of the Netherlands became foremost in the world. Dutch ships were found on all seas, shipbuilding was developed in Holland to the highest degree of perfection, and Dutch shipbuilders built not only for Holland but for all other countries as well.[2] Grotius tells us that towards the end of the sixteenth century the Netherlands built two thousand new ships every year,[3] while Sir Walter Raleigh wrote 'the Low Countries have as many ships and vessels as eleven kingdoms of Christendom have, let England be one, and not a timber-tree growing in their own country.'[4]

Owing to the shallowness of many of the Dutch harbours and waterways, the Dutch ships had to be of a peculiar shape. They had to be round, wide-bellied and flat-bottomed, in order to enable them to ride on the surface of the water and to lie on the sand at low tide. These ships were slow sailers, but they had the great advantage of possessing a much larger storage capacity than was possessed by the ships of other nations. Therefore Dutch ships could take in far more freight than foreign ships. Owing to their greater roominess, he Dutch ships could be more easily loaded and unloaded, and, owing to their steadiness, they could be more easily manœuvred than ships of other nations, and required a smaller number of sailors. For these reasons, the broad, flat-bottomed clumsy Dutch ships could transport goods at a much lower price than could their foreign competitors.[5]

[1] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 70.* [2] *Ibid.* vol. i. 72.*
[3] Grotius, *Annales*, 1657.**
[4] Raleigh, *Observations Touching Trade with the Hollanders*, 1603.**
[5] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 79.*

In consequence of the war, the Netherlands became the carriers of the world, and they were so-called by all other nations.[1] They had a most excellent geographical position for international commerce, they possessed the best freight-ships, the best sailors, and by far the best ship-yards. Unable to compete, the French and many other people were compelled to leave almost their whole sea transport to the Dutch.[2] The Netherlands seemed to be destined for ever to remain the carriers of the world.

The vastness of the shipping trade of the Netherlands gave rise to their celebrated marine insurance system, the Dutch forerunner of Lloyds, which effected insurances for all nations.

The Dutch insurance industry, like so many great Dutch industries and trades, arose under official auspices. In 1598, a Chamber for insuring ships against damage or loss was created by the magistrate of Amsterdam. By the official regulations, confirmed by the States of Holland in 1612, it was stipulated that goods could be insured only up to nine-tenths of their value, in order to deter people from over-insuring and deliberately sinking the ships, and from making their foundering likely by overloading them.[3] Legislation similar to that which Samuel Plimsoll advocated thirty years ago in England was three hundred years ago introduced by a Dutch government. The ships' bodies also could be insured for only part of their value. Ships used for warlike purposes, such as privateers, could be insured only up to two-thirds of their value, and their freight and equipment could not be insured at all. Unpatriotic ship-owners or captains were thus deprived of all inducement to let their ships fall into the enemy's hands. According to paragraph 15 of the Insurance Regulations, merchandise transported by land could be insured only up to nine-tenths of its value, and carts, carthorses, &c., only up to half their value.[4] Therefore, carters would have found it very unprofitable to arrange a robbery. These regulations are characteristic. They show that, in the early time of the Republic, the Dutch Government did not follow a policy of unrestricted individualism, but that it

[1] Sir Wm. Temple, *United Provinces*, 1672, chap. vi.**
[2] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 79.*
[3] *Ibid.* vol. i. 109.*
[4] *Ibid.* vol. i. 115.*

fostered business and protected the public against the frauds of unscrupulous business men with the greatest care, acting in the same way in which Germany acts at the present day.[1]

The war had created many new and highly profitable industries in the Netherlands, but although these new industries were most vigorously developed, the ancient industries were by no means neglected. Agriculture had been the fundamental industry of the great commercial and industrial communities of the past, and those communities, which at one time possessed commercial and industrial supremacy, from Phœnicia, Athens and Carthage to Bruges and Antwerp, had fallen an easy prey to the conqueror, largely because they had neglected that industry which supplied them with food and warlike men, as has been shown in Chapter IV. The Low Countries were unsuitable for the pursuit of agriculture. Food and warlike men were raised by their immense fishing industry. Therefore the Dutch saw in that most important industry not only a source of profit but before all a source of national strength.

Mindful of the fate of all great commercial communities of the past, the Netherlands did not desert their fundamental for more profitable industries, but strove to extend their fishing industry in order to enlarge the basis of their power. With this object in view, the Dutch Government supervised, directed, controlled and developed the fishing and fish-curing industry. In accordance with the official regulations, fishing was allowed only during the best period of the year, only mature fish was to be barrelled, fish and barrels had to be absolutely in accordance with the official standard of excellence, the system of curing invented by Benkelszoon[2] had to be carried out in strict obedience to detailed official regulations, and the fish barrels bore the Government stamp. The best method of fishing and curing was enforced, and the consumers in all countries were sure of receiving uniform and excellent supplies. The Dutch Government's stamp on the fish barrels was a universally recognised hall-mark of excellence; the Dutch fish found the readiest sale throughout the world.

The Dutch statesmen did not believe in the policy of laissez-faire. They feared that a few unscrupulous individuals might

[1] *Modern Germany*, 1905. [2] See page 31.

irretrievably damage the fundamental industry of the country. They were determined to prevent such a calamity; and by their wise and energetic action they succeeded in making the Dutch fishing industry wonderfully prosperous.

Most of the fish caught by the Dutch was netted on the British coasts, and Sir Walter Raleigh described the extent of the huge Dutch fishing industry as follows: 'The Hollanders have about 3,000 ships to fish withal, and 50,000 people are employed yearly by them upon your Majesty's coasts of England, Scotland and Ireland. These 3,000 fishing ships and vessels of the Hollanders do employ near 9,000 other ships and vessels, and 150,000 persons more by sea and land to make provision to dress and transport the fish they take, and return commodities whereby they are enabled to build yearly 1,000 ships and vessels, having not one timber-tree growing in their own country, nor home-bred commodities to lade 100 ships, and yet they have 20,000 ships and vessels, and all employed.'[1]

In consequence of the war with Spain, the Netherlands had become the workshop of the world, the traders of the world, the carriers of the world, and the world's colonisers and planters. Through their vast and rapidly growing prosperity the Dutch were to become also the bankers of the world. Amsterdam had become the world's produce-exchange, and the financial business transacted by all nations in that town was enormous. Individual enterprise and the free competition of merchants and bankers had not succeeded in evolving a well-organised and universally trusted financial institution for settling the international monetary transactions to which the world-wide trade of the Dutch gave rise. The Netherlands lacked a powerful bank worthy of serving not only as a national but also as a universal clearing-house and as a central reservoir of international capital. The necessity of relying on the credit of private individuals kept the rate of interest high; money was dear and the country was swamped with clipped foreign coin. In view of these circumstances the Government of Amsterdam resolved, with its usual enterprise and sagacity in commercial matters, to create the needed institution.[2]

[1] Raleigh, *Observations Touching Trade with the Hollanders*, 1603.**

[2] Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, book iv. chap. iii.

The celebrated Bank of Amsterdam was established by the magistrate of that town in 1609. This bank, which became by far the foremost money centre of the world, was a government institution, as may be seen from its regulations, which begin with the words: 'In order to abolish the dearness of, and the confusion in, monies, and in order to accommodate those who require monies in commerce, the magistrate of Amsterdam, authorised by their High-Mightinesses the States, and advised to do so by the thirty-six town councillors, have thought it necessary that order should be established with regard to matters of exchange and other matters connected with them by the creation of a Bank of Exchange.'[1]

The creation of the Bank of Amsterdam is an excellent instance of the initiative and enterprise of the Dutch Government in commercial matters. In order to insure the absolute security of monies deposited in the Bank of Amsterdam, the town of Amsterdam undertook full responsibility for all monies left with the bank, and guaranteed its solvency and the regular payment of all monies due.[2]

By creation of the Bank of Amsterdam, the Dutch Government at one stroke stopped the pernicious activity of a host of impecunious, grasping, or dishonest private bankers, money-changers and usurers. It originated the granting of cheap credit to all bona-fide borrowers, and thereby greatly benefited the productive industries and the vast commerce of the Netherlands. It instituted order and regularity in matters of international exchange, and gave to the traders of all countries the utmost confidence in the financial stability of the bank. Therefore, foreign capitalists and traders hastened to deposit part of their funds in the Bank of Amsterdam, and thus the capital of the whole world was made to gravitate towards the Netherlands.[3]

During almost two centuries Amsterdam occupied the place which Antwerp had previously occupied. In Adam Smith's time, Amsterdam was still 'the great warehouse of Europe for bullion.'[4] Thus the commercial centre of the world became the financial centre of the world, the world's money market, the

[1] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 153.* [2] *Ibid.*
[3] Sir Wm. Temple, *United Provinces*, 1672, chap. vi.**
[4] Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, book iv. chap. iii.*

world's clearing-house, the world's stock-exchange, the world's banker, and the world's financier. Nowhere in the world was money as cheap and as plentiful as it was in Amsterdam. By the wise initiative of its government, Amsterdam was given a position in financial matters similar to that which London used to enjoy at the time when England was the banker of the world.

CHAPTER VIII

THE NETHERLANDS OBTAIN THE RANK OF A GREAT POWER, AND THE CAUSE OF THEIR DECLINE BECOMES DISTINCTLY APPARENT

'An error in the original structure and constitution of the Government often proves ruinous to Republics and Oligarchies.'—ARISTOTLE, *Politics*, vii. 7.

'No historical account can be of greater service to those who govern a democracy than an account which lays bare the first cause of the dissensions and divisions which have taken place in a Republic; for, from the experience of others, politicians may learn much practical wisdom, and the importance of maintaining peace and unity at home.'—MACHIAVELLI, *History of Florence*, Introduction.

PHILIP II., who, wishing to ruin the Netherlands and to establish a universal Spanish-Roman Catholic monarchy, had ruined Spain and founded the United Netherlands, died in 1598. During more than forty years that ill-starred monarch had ruled the gigantic Spanish world-empire, and his government had proved fatal to it. At the time of the abdication of Charles V. in favour of his son, in 1555, Spain was by far the strongest and wealthiest State in the world, but her suicidal policy of intolerance and persecution at home and abroad, and many costly wars, especially the never-ending war with the Netherlands, had drained Spain of her riches, and had utterly ruined that formerly flourishing land. The decline of Spain began under the rule of Philip II., and continued for a long time, and it is difficult to realise now that Spain ever was the richest, the most powerful, and the most influential country in Europe.

Philip II. bequeathed to Philip III., his weakly, indolent, and unintelligent son, an utterly impoverished State. The finances of Spain were in the greatest confusion, the King had been compelled to defraud his foreign creditors, mutinies among the

Spanish troops were frequent, owing to irregular pay, and Spain daily grew weaker and poorer.

We have seen in the foregoing chapter that the war with Spain had proved indirectly most advantageous to the Netherlands; that it had created a certain sense of unity and of nationality among the numerous self-governing political units; that it had led to the creation of an excellent army and navy; that it had immensely increased the industries and the commerce of the Dutch, and that it had given them the rule of the sea and an enormous colonial empire. However, the war had proved also directly advantageous to the Netherlands. The wealth of Spain and of the Spanish and Portuguese colonies was spent in financing the war against the Netherlands, and a very large, perhaps the larger, part of this war expenditure was incurred at the seat of war, in the shape of soldiers' pay, the purchase of provisions, &c. As the Spanish Netherlands, where the fighting mostly took place, were plundered by both the Dutch and the Spanish armies, these countries could not raise the necessary supplies for the Spaniards. Hence the Spanish troops received their supplies indirectly from the Dutch Netherlands, exactly as Napoleon I.'s soldiers were clothed and equipped by the manufacturing industries of England, notwithstanding the Berlin decree. The Spanish Netherlands were like a sieve, through which the wealth of Spain and of the Spanish and Portuguese colonies rapidly filtered into the great industrial and commercial towns of the Dutch, and to these the war, which impoverished Spain, was in every respect exceedingly profitable.

The resources of Spain had been wasted, her industries had almost disappeared, the country was peopled with beggars, criminals, and unemployed workers; the centre of the Spanish world-empire, like the centre of the Roman world-empire in the days of its decadence, had to be fed by foreign countries; the mighty tree had become rotten at the heart. The capitalists of Spain, like those of ancient Rome,[1] had transferred their capital to foreign countries and to the colonies, which had become the seats of industry and production, and the motherland lived on 'foreign tribute.' Spain, like Rome, could subsist only by mercilessly exploiting her colonies. The solvency of Spain

[1] See page 49 ff.

depended on her colonial wealth, her colonial monopoly, and her silver fleet, and the Dutch were encroaching upon the former and threatening the latter. The question whether the Dutch would succeed or fail in capturing the silver fleet, which once a year left the Spanish colonies for the mother country, had become one of life or death for Spain, and caused yearly increasing anxiety to Spain's foreign creditors, to whom the silver was mortgaged. The Dutch having begun successfully to attack Spain in the most vulnerable spot, the very existence of Spain as a State imperatively demanded the conclusion of peace in the Netherlands. Therefore, the proud King of Spain had resolved to ask the Dutch rebels for peace.

While Spain was compelled to make peace almost at any price, the Netherlands had little cause to end a war which from year to year was proving increasingly profitable to them. In fact, it was to their interest to prolong the war until Spain was utterly exhausted, for only then would they be able to conclude a peace which would be advantageous, safe, and lasting. Only then would they be able to safeguard their independence against Spanish interference, and also to demand the withdrawal of Spain from the unhappy Spanish Netherlands, which, in the hands of Spain, would be a sallyport for future attacks and an ever-present menace to the Dutch.

Had the Netherlands waited to conclude a peace with Spain until that country was absolutely exhausted, they could have obtained the withdrawal of the Spaniards from the Spanish Netherlands, and those provinces which form the present States of Belgium and Holland might easily have been united in a large and powerful confederation able to resist any Power and any combination of Powers. However, it was not only politically but also morally incumbent upon the Dutch to free from the Spanish yoke their brethren, who, as long as they were able, had assisted the Dutch in their struggle for liberty. It was not only politically a mistake but morally a crime for the Dutch to desert their old companions in arms and to allow them to be misgoverned, impoverished, and outraged by their tyrants.

About the time when the Dutch politicians were discussing the conclusion of a truce with Spain, Sir Walter Raleigh wrote: "The chief reasons to move a war are the justice of the cause, the

facility of success, and the profit of victory.'[1] The Dutch ought to have continued a war which was just, easy, profitable, and honourable. However, the policy of democracy is, as a rule, directed rather in the interest of an influential party than in that of the nation. The Netherlands proved no exception to the rule. They broke off the war with Spain at a moment when it ought to have been vigorously continued, for party political, not for national, reasons, as the following pages will show.

In 1584, at the time of the murder of William Prince of Orange, the position of the United Netherlands was a desperate one. All was confusion in the Low Countries, the Spanish army under the Prince of Parma was triumphant, they had conquered a large part of the Dutch Netherlands, and the defeat of the Dutch by the enormous power of Philip II. seemed so certain that the Netherlands had felt compelled humbly to offer the sovereignty over the country to foreign potentates able to protect them. So hopeless seemed then the resistance of the Netherlands against Spain that both France and England had refused to accept that offer, notwithstanding the instant entreaties, one might almost say the prayers, of the Dutch.

William I., the founder of the Netherlands Republic, had been rather a statesman, a diplomat, an administrator, and a politician than a general. Though he had considerable military capacity, he lacked military genius. Prince Maurice, on the other hand, had grown up in the camp; he had proved himself a military genius of the first rank, but, like most soldiers, he did not possess the flexibility, patience, cautiousness, tact, and eloquence required in a statesman and a politician. He knew better how to command than to persuade, to act than to plan and to plot, to execute than to organise, to fight an army with the sword than a political opponent with the pen or the tongue.

When Prince Maurice was hardly more than a boy he had been made commander of the military forces of the Netherlands, and under his able leadership the fortune of war had rapidly changed in favour of the Dutch. He led the armies of the United Provinces from victory to victory. He defeated the ablest Spanish commanders, expelled the Spanish from the Dutch Netherlands, conquered part of the Spanish Netherlands, took

[1] Sir W. Raleigh, *The Cabinet Council*, published 1658.

Spanish fortresses which were thought to be impregnable, and thus 'established the full liberty of the Netherlands,' as is said in the inscription on the mausoleum which the Dutch erected to his father's memory.[1]

The victories won by the Dutch armies under Prince Maurice wonderfully increased the political importance and prestige of the Netherlands. The United Provinces, which had been considered as an association of rebels, began to be looked upon as a State. England and France, which had disdained the sovereignty over the Netherlands, eagerly sought the alliance of the young Dutch Commonwealth. Thus Prince William had created, and Prince Maurice had firmly established, the Republic of the United Netherlands, and the Dutch politicians observed with dislike born of jealousy the growing importance and influence which the Prince had acquired over the Dutch people; for Maurice, like his father, was beloved by the masses.

On July 2, 1600, the great battle of Nieuport was fought between Prince Maurice and the Spaniards. The position of the Dutch army, which, against Maurice's advice, had been sent by the civilian politicians into an exposed position, was most critical, and they were threatened with annihilation. The Dutch forces were taken by surprise by the Spaniards, they were cut off from their base, they had no supplies and no food, retreat was impossible, their advance guard—a large part of their army—had been almost annihilated, and the main body of the Dutch army seemed likely to share its fate. On the issue of the battle depended the fate of the Republic, and Prince Maurice prepared himself for death or victory. He sent the civilian deputies of the States-General, who accompanied the army in order to direct and watch the commander and ostensibly to maintain the supremacy of the civil over the military power, to Ostend, where they were safe from the enemy, and ordered his transports away, resolved that he and his army should die the soldier's death if defeated, for no mercy was expected at the hands of the Spaniards. Intoxicated by their victory over Maurice's advance guard, the Spaniards threw themselves on the main force of the Prince, but, owing to his courage and skill, Prince Maurice succeeded against all expectation in totally defeating the Spanish

[1] See page 108.

army and in capturing the whole of the enemy's artillery and baggage and more than a hundred colours.

Meanwhile the Dutch deputies in Ostend were bewailing their folly in having exposed their army to almost certain destruction by over-ruling their great general. They were praying and singing hymns and listening with terror to the distant cannonade. After Maurice's victory they might have cut off and captured, or totally destroyed, the fleeing Spanish army, which Maurice was not able to pursue with his hungry and exhausted troops, for the civilian deputies had with them a considerable body of soldiers for their personal protection. However, so great was their dread of the Spanish soldiers that no one in Ostend dared to put his head outside the city walls. The deputies spent their time on their knees, instead of endeavouring to assist their great general.[1] On the next day Maurice arrived in Ostend with his victorious army, to the great relief of the terrified politicians.

Two thousand years ago a Greek statesman wrote: 'Signal and important services seldom fail to excite sharp malevolence and calumny.'[2] The exuberant joy of the civilian deputies was mingled with jealous resentment at the brilliancy of the victory which Maurice had won. They foresaw with bitterness that the victory of Nieuport, the greatest and most important which the Prince had obtained hitherto, would still further increase his prestige, and from that day the Dutch politicians became hostile to the man who had saved them and their country. All the great Dutch historians agree that the masterly victory of Nieuport was the principal cause of the determined opposition which ever after Maurice experienced at the hands of the leading Dutch politicians, and especially of John of Barneveld.[3]

Two centuries before Christ, the Carthaginian politicians, actuated by political jealousy, were more anxious to destroy Hannibal and their own victorious army than the enemies of their nation. Hanno persuaded the Carthaginian Senate not to send supplies to Hannibal, and the Hannonian party even

[1] Meteren, *Histoire*, 1618, book xxii. 484**; Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book xxxiii. chap. xx.*; Cerisier, *Histoire*, vol. iv. 470.*

[2] Polybius, *History*, book i. chap. iii.

[3] Cerisier, *Histoire des Provinces Unies*, vol. iv. 476.*

demanded that Hannibal should be delivered up to the Romans.[1] But for the jealousy of the party politicians, Hannibal would have destroyed Rome,[2] and when he was recalled he exclaimed with bitterness: 'They recall me, they who have, for a long time past, been dragging me home, by refusing me supplies both of men and money. It is not the Romans, whom I have so often routed, who have defeated Hannibal, but the Carthaginian Senate through the malicious suggestions of envy, nor will my opponent Scipio exult and pride himself so much in this my recall and retreat as will Hanno, who, unable to do it by any other means, has crushed our family under the ruins of Carthage.'[3] It is not surprising that Appian called the Hannonian party in Carthage the 'Pro-Roman Faction.'[4]

Jealousy and distrust are characteristics of democracy. Actuated by motives similar to those which actuated the politicians of the Hannonian party, the Dutch politicians were, after the battle of Nieuport, more anxious to weaken the influence of Prince Maurice in order to exalt their own than to destroy the Spanish power and to consolidate the Dutch Commonwealth. Party politicians have acted in this manner in all countries and all ages. This was the frame of mind among the leaders of the Dutch burghers when the Spanish, in 1607, asked for peace, which they required in order to recuperate and to consolidate their power.

Prince Maurice had advised the Dutch statesmen to vigorously continue the war until the Spaniards were so thoroughly beaten that they would be ready to conclude a satisfactory peace, but his advice was disregarded. Preliminary negotiations with Spain were entered upon, and it soon became clear that the Spaniards did not intend to waive their pretensions to dominion over the Netherlands or to conclude a lasting peace. They merely wished for delay and an opportunity of regaining by intrigue that which the Dutch had won by the sword. The secret plotting of the Spanish diplomats became known, causing a public scandal, and Prince Maurice again and again urged the States to break off these delusive and treacherous negotiations and to continue the war with energy until Spain was ready to conclude an honest

[1] Livy, xxi. 9.
[2] Cornelius Nepos, *Hannibal*, i.
[3] Livy, xxx. 20.
[4] Appian, *De Rebus Punicis*, 68.

and a lasting peace, but his representations proved unavailing. With the very best arguments one can convince the understanding but not the will. The Dutch oligarchs were determined to make peace not because the Netherlands needed peace, but because peace would increase their own power and convert their illustrious general into an ordinary citizen.

An old historian tells us, 'The success of the States in the thirty years war by land, and the mighty growth of their naval power and trade, had made all those concerned in the war by sea or land, as well as the greatest part of the people, whose hatred against Spain was still as great as ever, adverse to a peace.'[1] Yet though the war was both profitable and popular, though the masses of the people, and practically the whole of the Dutch clergy, clamoured for its continuation, the Dutch politicians, who claimed to act in the name of the people, were determined to end the war at any price. That sagacious diplomat, Sir William Temple, informs us, 'The credit and power of Prince Maurice, built at first upon that of his father, but much raised by his own personal virtue and qualities, and the success of his arms, was now grown so high that several of the States, headed by Barneveld, Pensioner of Holland, a man of great ability and authority among them, became jealous of the Prince's power, and pretended to fear the growth of it to an absolute dominion. They knew that his power would increase by the continuation of the war, which was wholly managed by the Prince, and they thought that it would diminish in peace and give way to their authority. This thought disposed the whole party to desire the treaty and to advance the progressive issue of it by all their assistance.'[2]

Since 1588, the supreme power in the Netherlands had been in the hands of close municipal corporations of a burgher aristocracy, or rather oligarchy. At the head of this element was John van Barneveld, the Pensionary, that is, the Prime Minister, of the Province of Holland. Barneveld was omnipotent in the council of that province, and as Holland was by far the largest and the wealthiest of the seven Dutch provinces, the influence of Holland and of its Pensioner was paramount in the Assembly

[1] *Atlas Geographus*, 1711, vol. i. 799.

[2] Sir Wm. Temple, *United Provinces*, 1672, chap. i.*

of the States-General. It was Barneveld who headed the party in favour of a peace or of a truce with Spain. Barneveld was attached to that system of government under which the rights of the individual provinces and towns were jealously guarded, and political power was exercised through the Assembly of the States-General, though in such a way as to secure a preponderant influence to his own great province. Hence, he had begun to look with misgivings upon the authority which the House of Orange was acquiring through the continuance of the war, and all those who viewed with aversion any advance in the direction of national organisation, centralisation and monarchy, and especially the municipal oligarchies, shared his desire to end the war.[1]

While, through the intrigues of the Dutch politicians, who did not hesitate to openly aid the machinations of the Spanish diplomats, the negotiations for peace were spun out during more than a year, largely in order to tire out Prince Maurice—a settlement would rapidly have been effected if, during the negotiations, the Dutch had energetically continued the war on sea and land, as Maurice had advised—the people in the Spanish Netherlands were ground down by military tyranny, and they looked with envy across the frontier towards their old allies. They would have liked to shake off the Spanish fetters, but unfortunately they had no confidence as to being assisted by the United Provinces, partly because the divisions of the Dutch were so great, partly because it was feared that, in the absence of an individual of commanding political influence, such as the late Prince William of Orange, secret negotiations for including the Spanish Netherlands in the union of the seven Dutch provinces would have been impossible, for one cannot negotiate secretly with a crowd. Those in the Spanish Netherlands who wished to shake off the Spanish yoke were afraid to negotiate with the many-headed neighbour State. Then, as on former occasions, 'the fear that it might become known if negotiations for a union were undertaken prevailed over the desire to free themselves from the tyranny from which they suffered.'[2] Hence, the people in the Spanish Nether-

[1] J. F. Jameson, *Life of Usselinx*, 1887, 26.

[2] Cerisier, *Histoire des Provinces Unies*, vol. iv. 300.*

lands were compelled to look on in silent despair while negotiations for a peace were in progress.

The Spanish negotiators made skilful use of the dissensions of the Netherlands which had split the whole of the country into two hostile camps. Some provinces and some towns were in favour of peace, others were in favour of war, discussions degenerated into angry quarrels and acrimonious accusations, the loose union existing between the self-governing States and towns was in danger of being broken. Encouraged by the violent disputes among the Dutch, the Spaniards increased their pretensions, especially when they saw that the influential politicians' party was more afraid of Prince Maurice than of Spain and therefore bent on peace at almost any price. Hence, after interminable delay, not a definite peace but merely a twelve years' truce was concluded. In that truce no notice whatever was taken of the unfortunate people of the Spanish Netherlands. Although these had fought shoulder to shoulder with the Dutch, and although the Dutch would not have been able to acquire their liberty without the assistance given by the Belgian Netherlands in the earlier stages of the war, the Dutch burgher politicians not only took no step to free them, but deliberately inflicted the greatest sufferings on them.

In 1585, after the city of Antwerp had fallen into the hands of the Spaniards, the Hollanders had built forts on the Scheldt in order to be able to intercept all ships which might attempt to get into Antwerp. Later on they had resorted to the device of rendering the river unnavigable by sinking vessels loaded with stones in its channel. 'Men shut their doors against the setting sun.' The merchant politicians of Amsterdam, who, through the decay of Antwerp, had acquired the trade of that town, meant to retain it by keeping the Scheldt closed to traffic. Notwithstanding the protests and entreaties of the unhappy people of Antwerp, the Dutch made it a condition of the truce that the Scheldt should remain closed to shipping for ever, and they achieved their aim. During more than two centuries, the port of Antwerp was inhumanly strangled by the Dutch, until the armies of the French Revolution at last freed it from its cruel fetters. Evidently, commercial greed can be quite as cruel as religious fanaticism.

Magnanimity in politics is not seldom the truest wisdom, and a great empire and little minds go ill together.[1] The politicians of the Netherlands would probably have continued the war until Spain was so thoroughly beaten that she was ready unconditionally to give up her claim to both the Dutch and the Spanish Netherlands, had they not feared that the continuation of the war and the growing prestige of Prince Maurice would cause the Dutch people to offer the sovereignty of the Netherlands, and perhaps a royal crown, to Prince Maurice. There was much reason to think that the Dutch people wished for a king, for at one time they were about to make the Prince of Orange their sovereign. Prince William of Orange had been offered the sovereignty of the provinces of Holland and Zeeland a short time before he was murdered. But for the pistol of Balthasar Gerard, that great prince would, in all human probability, have become the constitutional monarch of these two leading provinces, and, eventually, of all the Netherlands, both Dutch and Belgian.[2] By his untimely death, the thread of negotiations entered upon for that end was broken, to the great misfortune of the Netherlands.

His father's untimely death had prevented Maurice's elevation to the throne of Holland as William's successor. If Maurice had become the sovereign of Holland, the most populous and the wealthiest of the seven Dutch provinces, his dominion would, undoubtedly, have gradually extended over all the Dutch provinces, and it would have been possible to unite with the seven Dutch provinces the ten provinces still obedient to the King of Spain, and to convert both Netherlands into a single realm. Such a kingdom would have been more populous, more powerful and far wealthier than Great Britain and Ireland.[3] The world might have become Dutch.

It is true that much of the wealth and of the trade of the Dutch would have returned from Holland to Flanders and Brabant, whence they had come, had the two countries amalgamated. It is also true that the re-opening of the Scheldt might again have made Antwerp a more important harbour than

[1] Burke, Speech on conciliation with America.
[2] Motley, *United Netherlands*, 1867, vol. iv. 543.*
[3] Motley, *Barneveld*, vol. i. 27.

Amsterdam. However, the great Netherland nation created by the union of both Netherlands would not have suffered, although some individual Dutchmen might have been inconvenienced. The merchants of Holland need not have lost much by a union of both Netherlands, for they would have been able to transfer their business and their connections from Amsterdam to Antwerp, or from Leyden to Bruges.

The fact that the Dutch politicians strenuously worked against a re-union of the two Netherlands, whenever an opportunity occurred for converting the Netherlands into an empire, shows that the politicians directed the State not for the benefit of the nation, but for their own aggrandisement and for the benefit of a number of traders. The Dutch merchant politicians followed a commercial policy, a business policy, and the future was to show how unprofitable a policy which works for immediate gain often is if compared with a spirited national and patriotic policy.

At one time it was intended that Prince Maurice should be made the sovereign of the Netherlands and that he should be given that place which had been prepared for his murdered father. As late as 1602, a secret conference was held at the house of Barneveld in which Barneveld himself urged the claims of the Prince to the sovereignty, and reminded his hearers that the signed and sealed documents—with the concurrence of the Amsterdam municipality alone lacking—by which Prince William had been invited to assume the crown were still in the possession of his son.[1] Unfortunately, nothing came of this plan. The Netherlands were to receive neither a permanent head nor a national organisation.

The inner history of the Netherlands is the history of a constant struggle between a national party, a party of union and of centralisation, headed by the Stadtholder and the aristocrats, the army and the clergy on the one hand, and on the other hand a pseudo-democratic party, a party of disintegration, a party opposed to an organic and national union of the Dutch provinces and towns, a party clamouring for complete local autonomy and local privileges and constantly striving to subordinate national interests to local interests, to party interests and to private

[1] Motley, *United Netherlands*, 1867, vol. iv. 544.*

interests, headed by burgher magistrates who possessed local pre-eminence. As this struggle between the two great Dutch parties has the most important bearing on the history of the Netherlands, we must cast a glance at its genesis and early development.

Up to the time when the Netherlands revolted against Spain the numerous self-governing units, provinces, towns and other corporations which were tiny independent States in practice, though not in name, were held together by their mighty common overlord. The oppression and tyranny of Philip II. had led to the great war with Spain, and in the beginning of the revolutionary struggle a bond of union was created by fear, and some constitutional and administrative unity was made possible by the convenient political fiction that the place of Philip II., the ruler of all the Netherlands, was temporarily taken by the Prince of Orange, who was supposed to be acting on the King's behalf, and who issued his decrees to all the States in the King's name. Therefore, the revolted Netherlands were, for a considerable time, comparatively easily manageable, especially as the Prince of Orange enjoyed the greatest prestige.

A loose constitutional bond among the revolted provinces and towns had been created by the ill-starred Union of Ghent, called the Pacification of Ghent, of 1576, which temporarily united all the seventeen provinces of both Netherlands and by the subsequent separate Union of Utrecht, of 1579, which united the seven provinces of the Dutch Netherlands, of which details have been given.[1] Both unions were merely treaties of alliance between a number of independent sovereign republics which possessed neither a national organisation nor a national executive, as has already been shown. The Netherlands were a State only in theory.

As long as William I. lived, the management of war, foreign affairs, and defence for the revolted provinces was under his control. He was aided by two council boards, but the circumstances of history and the character of the man had invested him with an inevitable dictatorship. After his untimely death the State Council fell into comparative disuse, Prince Maurice, its head, was nearly always absent at the wars, and the great functions

[1] See pages 96 and 99.

of the confederacy passed from the control of the Stadtholder into the possession of the national debating society, the States-General.[1] The central power was weakened, the strength of the individual States was increased, at the cost of the nation.

The States-General were not an assembly authorised to decide on behalf of all the individual provinces and cities. They could only deliberate, for the decision rested with the individual provinces, which, in their turn, had to obtain the sanction of the independent cities and other bodies. Hence, the sovereignty of the Netherlands lay, not with the States-General, nor with the seven provinces, but with the fifty-six towns and the corporations of the rural nobility and of the Frisian peasantry. Thus, an oligarchy, composed of 2,000 politicians and local dignitaries, ruled the nation,[2] and as each separate government tried to work for the benefit of the locality over which it ruled, some sixty governments were pulling in some sixty directions, instead of pulling together. Some sixty governments had laboriously to be brought into line and to arrive at unanimity before a national measure could be concerted. A central authority able to speak and to act in the name and with the authority of the whole Dutch commonwealth and to direct it existed then as little in the Netherlands as it exists now in the British Empire.

Except in matters of purely formal character, deputies had to vote, not according to their convictions, but in accordance with their instructions.[3] Many times did instances occur when the deputies had to return home or to write to their constituents for instructions, declaring that they were 'not charged.' Very rarely did they venture to decide any point on their own authority and then only with the reservation of approval by their principals.[4] Therefore, if some town or other showed opposition in matters where unity was required, it had to be persuaded, coaxed or bribed into assent by the others to prevent it from cutting itself adrift from the commonwealth. The most urgent matters often remained pending during many weeks or months[5] and precious

[1] Motley, *United Netherlands*, 1867, vol. iv. 565.*
[2] Treitschke, *Aufsätze*, 1886–97, vol. ii. 451.
[3] Kluit, *Hollandsche Staatsregering*, iii. 138.**
[4] Blok, *United Netherlands*, 1898, vol. ii. 382.*
[5] Wenzelburger, *Geschichte*, 1879, vol. ii. 718

moments needed for action were wasted in unprofitable discussions.

Not only the State but the individual provinces also lacked true unity. Certain obscure but independent lordships refused to accept the Union. Vianen, in Holland, formerly a fief of Utrecht, later a seignory of the Brederodes; Kuilenburg, then a countship of the Pallands', the estates of Ravestein, and Zevenaar; Buren, the countship of the Oranges, formerly of the Egmonts; Ameland, the heritage of the Caminghas—all these were examples of this condition. Utrecht refused to accept the truce with Spain, and was 'illegally and unconstitutionally' forced by an army of the States-General to accept the truce. Every province was a conglomeration of heterogeneous parts, cities, estates, lordships, and each part was a separate unity possessing individual rights, privileges, customs of administration, traditions and jurisdictions.[1]

The celebrated Hugo Grotius wrote, in 1622, 'The United provinces form an alliance similar to the Amphictyonic Council of Greece. Unity is, according to the pact of union, restricted to foreign affairs, but as regards administration the Republic is an agglomeration of independent republics, and each province contains an individual nation and forms a complete State.'[2] The organisation of the United Netherlands and the mutual relations between the various units were evidently as complicated as are the organisation and the relations of the numerous units composing the British Empire. 'There has, perhaps, never existed a government which was as complicated as that of the young Dutch commonwealth in its early years of acknowledged independence.'[3]

There is a curious resemblance between the organisation of the Dutch Republic and that of the British Empire, and a glance at the organisation of the latter will enable us realise the difficulties of the Dutch. The Government of the British is, nominally, in the hands of the Prime Ministers of Great Britain and of the various self-governing colonies, who form a college resembling the States-General. The States-General of the

[1] Blok, *United Netherlands*, 1898, vol. ii. 383.*
[2] *Apologeticus eorum qui Hollandiæ*, &c. Paris, 1622.
[3] Blok, *United Netherlands*, 1898, vol. ii. 377.*

British Empire have to act in accordance with the directions of the States Provincial, that is in accordance with the directions of numerous parties, factions and influential personages. Each of the important districts in Great Britain and the Colonies, such as Lancashire or the French part of Canada, and each of the important economic interests, such as the shipping interest, is represented in the various Parliaments and has its influence in all decisions. Lastly, individual newspapers, individual politicians and wealthy contributors to the party fund have a considerable influence upon political decisions, and are able to impede or to affect the action of the whole, exactly as independent Dutch villages and deputies could oppose or impede the action of the Dutch Commonwealth. In the absence of an imperial government consisting of an imperial prime minister aided by an imperial senate and an imperial foreign office, war office, admiralty and treasury, concerted action is quite as difficult on the part of the British Empire as it was on the part of the United Netherlands. The directors of the empire do not direct the empire, but follow the chance currents of influence to wherever they will drive them. Under those circumstances, foresight is almost an unnecessary quality in a prime minister. The ship of state is manned by a self-willed crew, and the captain in command has, with the best grace possible, to accept the will of a chance majority, or rather of a noisy minority—as the majority is always indifferent, majority-rule means minority-rule—and to steer the ship in what direction they choose, without heeding the consequences.

The Netherlands, like the British Empire, were only a loose conglomeration of independent States, not a State, and the lack of a national organisation made a far-sighted foreign policy, the creation of great national institutions, timely diplomatic action, and the preparation of an adequate military defence in time of peace almost impossible. While the numerous Dutch governments were quarrelling among themselves, the enemy was acting. Obedience to chance influences and lack of a national controlling power compelled the leading Dutch statesmen to leave everything to chance, and killed responsibility, efficiency, the national strength, patriotism, and made misgovernment supported

by endless talk, muddle, confusion and ineptitude permanent in the country.

Dire necessity, the fear of ruin and of death by torture, had caused the Dutch to stand together like one man during the time of extreme danger, but it seemed doubtful whether their unity could be maintained once that danger was removed. In a contemporary English tract we read of the young Dutch Commonwealth: 'It is not possible without an enemy abroad to keep these provinces united; every province, nay, every town, would be a sovereign commonwealth, and take notice of no command but their own reason.'[1] The French ambassador in the Netherlands, the celebrated President Jeanin, perhaps the ablest diplomat of his age, wrote in 1609: 'There is at present no bond which holds together the provinces, nor is there a magistrate who takes care of the general welfare. All the provinces, and many of the individual towns in the provinces, are independent bodies which possess all the power and all the rights of sovereignty.'[2] Therefore Jeanin repeatedly recommended the improvement of the Dutch constitution by the creation of an elected central authority possessed of greater executive power, which should be authorised to act on behalf of the nation and able to adjust the differences between individual provinces. He recommended that that authority should be vested in a national council entitled to decide on peace, war, alliances, financial matters, and taxation.

All patriotic Dutchmen recognised the need of a central authority, yet Jeanin's advice was not followed, because Barneveld, who feared that such a council would restrict his own power and that of his party and his province, opposed its creation, although he could not advance any valid arguments for his purely selfish opposition.[3] Indeed, Barneveld himself was, in his heart of hearts, convinced that the lack of a national organisation boded the greatest danger to the State. He had urged, in 1607, in a thoughtful memoir: 'The United Netherlands are not a republic, but seven individual provinces, each of which has its own form of government, and they have nothing

[1] *The Politia of the United Provinces*, Somers Collection, vol. iii. 634.
[2] *Archives d'Orange*, série ii. vol. ii. 59.**
[3] Van Kampen, *Geschichte*, 1831, i. 599.

in common but that they are by contract bound to aid one another in mutual defence. Therefore, when there is no danger of an attack from without, this government will fall into absolute anarchy and disorder through mutual jealousy and general indifference, and herein lies one of our weakest points, where the enemy may attack us. If we have not a government with sufficient authority to rule the country, to keep together the provinces and towns in perfect unity; if we have not a government which has authority to force those who resist to fulfil their obligations without having to wait for the consent of provinces and towns, we must be destroyed. If we have first to convince the individual provinces of the machinations of an enemy, and then to prove to them that vigorous preparations for defence are necessary, many towns will be taken before a decision for defence is arrived at. *Dum Romæ deliberatur, perit Saguntum.*' [1]

From the foregoing weighty and statesmanlike words of warning we can see that Barneveld saw as clearly as did Prince Maurice the necessity of creating a national organisation, and of not allowing national matters to drift wherever circumstances, chance currents, and momentary impulses would drive them. Yet Barneveld the statesman was overruled by Barneveld the politician. It is true that Barneveld at one time had pleaded that Prince Maurice was the only man in the Netherlands who had sufficient authority throughout the country to create a national government and that he should be placed on the throne; but when the greatest danger from Spanish oppression was past, and when Barneveld's position and power in his own State, the province of Holland, had greatly increased, he aimed at ruling the Netherlands himself, and was no longer willing to subordinate himself to a national authority and to a national leader. He no longer saw in Prince Maurice the only possible head of the nation, but a political competitor, and 'he lost all relish for placing his great rival on the throne.' [2] Therefore, after Barneveld had become powerful, the idea of a republican constitution instead of a monarchical one, the idea of a constitution which

[1] Deventer, *Gedenkstukken*, 1860, vol. iii. 137.**

[2] Motley, *United Netherlands*, 1867, vol. iv. 544.*

would give to local interests superiority over national interests, had gained ground.[1]

The politicians of the numerous petty governments wanted to command, each in his own petty territory; none wanted to obey a national authority, even if that authority should be a representative body elected by the nation itself. Hence the politicians were determined to fight for the retention of their local and personal privileges, even at the risk of endangering the very existence of the nation. A contemporary English observer noted with surprise the selfish, unnational, and frequently anti-national attitude of the burgher politicians, and wrote of them: 'They had rather hear blasphemy uttered against God than any word of the abridging of any of their privileges, which they conserve so inviolably that they have quite broken the best and abused all the others.' [2]

The young Dutch Republic was held together by a purely sentimental bond of union, but it could not continue its grand and glorious existence when patriotism, its foundation, began to fail. If the creators of the republic ever believed that the sentimental tie of patriotism would suffice to maintain the Netherlands strong and undivided, they were mistaken. A more material tie of union, a tie of interest, was necessary.[3]

Every State is a legal person in international law, and should also be a person in the eyes of its citizens and of other nations. As a State has an individual character and individual responsibility, it should also possess an individual and undivided will and unity of purpose. That unity of will and purpose demands political unity, which can be created only by a national organisation. Without these the State will be powerless at a critical moment.

The truce of 1609 had put an end to forty years of constant war between the gigantic Spanish empire and the Dutch provinces. The Netherlands had succeeded in totally defeating the country which hitherto had been considered to be the most powerful one in Europe. In 1609 the Netherlands had the finest army and by far the strongest fleet in the world. They

[1] Van Kampen, *Geschichte*, 1831, i. 531.

[2] *Observations Concerning Present Affairs*, 1621, 18.

[3] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 415.*

had, during the war, become the greatest manufacturing and trading nation. They possessed a larger merchant marine than all other nations combined, and they had acquired a huge colonial empire. The position of the Netherlands was similar to that of Great Britain at the end of the Napoleonic war.

The young Dutch Commonweath was, no doubt, the most industrious, the most flourishing, the wealthiest and the most powerful country in the world. The greatest monarchs eagerly sought its alliance, and to the superficial observer the Dutch Commonwealth seemed likely to become the leading Power not only in Europe, but throughout the world. However, far-seeing statesmen were not deceived by the dazzling outward splendour of the republic, for they recognised the seeds of dissension and disintegration and the germ of future decline and decay in the budding commonwealth. They saw that the lack of a national organisation was bound to prove fatal to the Dutch Republic. Cardinal Bentivoglio, an exceedingly able statesman, who resided as the Pope's Nuncio in the Netherlands at that time, saw clearly the causes of the future decline and decay of the Netherlands when he prophetically wrote: 'The government is too much in the power of some of the provinces which lord it over the rest. Hence there is no real and effective unity among the United Provinces, outward appearances notwithstanding. However, not only diversities of interest, but religious differences as well, militate against the union of their minds. Many are the sects and religions, and in many things disagreeing, into which the people of the United Provinces are divided, and how can their forces be sufficient for their defence when they do not pull together?

'From all these circumstances we may conclude that this new commonwealth is not likely to maintain its present position.'[1]

Cardinal Bentivoglio did not live to see his remarkable prophecy come true.

[1] Bentivoglio, *Historical Relations*, 1630 (Eng. edit. 1652, 48).**

CHAPTER IX

PARTY STRIFE ARISING FROM THE LACK OF A WRITTEN CONSTITUTION AND OF A NATIONAL ORGANISATION GREATLY WEAKENS THE NETHERLANDS

'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.'—*St. Matthew*, xii. 25.

'That which is the bond of States is the car of the public good, and that which destroys them is the minding only of one's private advantage. Therefore it concerns both the State and private men to prefer the interests of the public to that of particular persons.'—PLATO, *de Legibus*, book ix.

'To prevent those destructive contentions for the supreme power which are sure to take place where the members of the State do not live under an acknowledged head and a known rule of succession; to preserve the people in tranquillity at home by a speedy and vigorous execution of the laws to protect their interests abroad by strength and energy in military operations, and by those advantages of decision, secrecy and dispatch which belong to the resolutions of monarchical councils: for these purposes the British Constitution has committed the executive government to the administration and limited authority of an hereditary king.'—WILLIAM PALEY, *Of the British Constitution*.

A NUMBER of unconnected bricks do not make a wall. A number of unconnected States, though inhabited by people of the same race, who possess the same language, the same religion, the same history, the same institutions and the same ideas, do not constitute a commonwealth or an empire.

Prince William of Orange, the founder of the Dutch Commonwealth, had died at a most unfortunate moment. He had united the numerous independent commonwealths of the Netherlands in an alliance, or loose confederation, but at the time of his death he had not yet succeeded in converting the loosely united Dutch provinces and towns into an organic whole, a State, and in giving it an appropriate and well-defined constitution. Through Prince William's sudden death, all was left in a state of transition and

of uncertainty. The form of the State and the distribution of powers, rights and responsibilities had not yet been determined.

In the primitive Dutch constitution no principle was absolutely settled. While throwing off a foreign tyranny and successfully defending their national independence, the burghers and nobles had not had time to lay down any organic law. A fundamental law, a law which gave stability and some kind of finality to the form and functions of the Netherlands commonwealth did not exist. Necessary as such an incorporation was for the very existence of the 'Union,' no constitutional union had ever been enacted.[1]

If the numerous republics of which the Dutch Netherlands were composed had been true democracies, the Dutch people would have been in possession of the sovereignty of the country, and it might have been comparatively easy to carry through a national organisation. However, the republics of the Dutch were democracies only in name and in outward appearance.

Rightly considered, there are no democracies. All so-called democracies are oligarchies. The Greek city democracies, in which the sovereign people, assembled in the market-place, decided on political matters, after having heard the views of their leaders and orators, were oligarchies of the orator. The Anglo-Saxon democracies, which are ruled by a small number of men, perhaps 2,000 in number, who form a narrow class, are oligarchies of the politician. Politics have become a profession, and 'the representatives of the people,' though elected by the people, not only belong as a rule to the narrow class of professional politicians, but they are often selected, one might almost say appointed, by the caucus managers, who also direct their policy. They are often lawyers who have been given their brief, and who act 'according to instructions received.' The people are merely given the choice of appointing one of the two alternative sets of professional politicians. Therefore, all the Anglo-Saxon democracies are oligarchies, and their rulers, though speaking in the name of the people, represent rather the will of a class than the will of the people, rather their own interests than national interests. Hence, we find that the resistance against unification of the British Empire arises chiefly from those

[1] Motley, *Barneveld*, 1875, i. 6.

'representatives of the people' who do not wish to play a secondary part in their own locality and to subordinate themselves to imperial authorities, while the masses of the people which they represent are in favour of imperial unification, and would greet with pleasure the creation of an imperial prime minister, an imperial senate and imperial government departments, such as an imperial foreign office, war office, admiralty, treasury, board of trade, post office, traffic department, &c.

The Dutch democracy was an oligarchy of the middle class. The burgher politicians had deprived the people of all direct influence upon and participation in, the government. The self-governing provinces and towns were administered by boards of twenty, twenty-four, twenty-eight, or thirty-six men, chosen from the leading citizens, who were appointed for life, and, as these boards renewed themselves by selecting their own members, the rulers of the Dutch democracies were, in reality, self-appointed.[1] Thus, the Dutch politicians had succeeded in usurping all power, and the masses could influence the government only by creating a riot and compelling by threats the magistrates, who had the command of police, and troops, to act in accordance with the popular will. 'The Dutch Republic was an improvised aristocracy of lawyers, manufacturers, bankers, and corporations.'[2] It was ruled by the commercial and capitalist interests.

Formerly a duke, a king, or an emperor had exercised supreme authority over all the provinces and towns, and had directed all the political units of the Netherlands through his local representatives, the Stadtholders, but in 1572 the supreme authority in the province of Holland, and soon after in the other provinces as well, passed to the commons, the assemblies of the States, who, in accepting or nominating a chief, gave him splendid titles, and called him a stadtholder, but shackled him by their control and direction.[3] The Netherlands had drifted into a confederacy of aristocratic republics, not because they had planned a republic, but because they could not get a king, foreign or native.[4] France

[1] Cerisier, *Histoire*, 1778, vol. iv. 138*; Temple, *United Provinces*, chap. ii.**

[2] Motley, *Barneveld*, 1875, vol. i. 377.

[3] *Archives d'Orange*, série ii. vol. ii. 58.**

[4] Motley, *Barneveld*, 1875, vol. i. 28.

and England had declined the sovereignty of the Netherlands, and the sudden death of William of Orange had prevented the Dutch from giving the crown to that prince, as had been intended.[1]

Through William's sudden death the Netherlands were left without a popular representation, without an executive head, and, worst of all, without a written constitution.[2] In the United Netherlands, exactly as in Great Britain and in the British Empire, the State was not organised, all was left to chance, every wheel in the State revolved by itself; a connected administrative machinery for the whole commonwealth had not been devised. Many Dutchmen were of the opinion that the Netherlands were not a State, exactly as many British people are of opinion that the British Empire is merely a geographical expression: that it is a State *in posse*, but not *in esse*.

In those States which possess a well-thought-out written constitution that strictly defines the rights, powers, functions, and responsibilities of the various governing factors, the activity of the elements which participate in the government and legislation is concentrated upon the business of the country. In those States which possess an 'unwritten constitution'—which means no constitution at all, for an unwritten constitution is like any other unwritten agreement, a tacit understanding without binding force—the activity of the various elements which participate in the government and legislation is chiefly directed towards 'evolving' the constitution. Every tree in a forest tries to grow and overshadow its neighbours, for that is the nature of trees. All men participating in the government of a country devoid of a written constitution strive to increase their rights and powers, and to diminish their responsibilities, for that is the nature of men. Therefore a written constitution is necessary.

We can best understand the constitution of the Dutch Commonwealth by a glance at the British constitution. The British constitution is a fiction, for everyone expounds, but no one knows, the constitution. Hence, everyone calls unconstitutional that of which he does not approve. It is true that there are certain constitutional rules and precedents, but those who do not wish to act in accordance with constitutional rules and established usage, simply claim that they act in accordance with the 'spirit'

[1] See page 156 f. [2] Motley, *United Netherlands*, 1867, vol. iv. 564.*

of the constitution, which they evolve from their inner consciousness, and lay down a new 'doctrine.' There are constitutional experts who, like all experts on doubtful matters, never agree; and every step which a statesman in authority wishes to take can be explained as being in accordance with the 'spirit' of the constitution by his constitutional experts, for constitutional experts, like lawyers, can be briefed. Therefore, the governing factors in a State which possesses an unwritten constitution are permanently in a latent state of war; the attention of the governing individuals is concentrated on the struggle for power, and the party game, while the actual business of the nation becomes a matter of secondary importance to the political oligarchs struggling for influence or for the spoils of office. In such States chaos prevails in the government offices; responsibilities have so often been shifted by constitutional evolutionists that at last nobody in authority is responsible; the most important decisions on national matters are left to irresponsible underlings. Governmental efficiency and unity of action do not exist, and the direction of national affairs is in the hands of that person, or that group of persons, who, through weight and influence, and skilful manœuvring, through chance, or merely through superior powers of the tongue, has become supreme. Countries with an unwritten constitution are ruled by chance currents. Wisdom is absent in their governments.

Through the death of the Prince of Orange the struggle for power between the constitutional factors had become a permanent institution in the Netherlands. Patriotism and self-interest had divided the thinking people in the Netherlands into two parties, a national party desiring the conversion of the loose agglomerate of petty oligarchical republics into an organised State, directed by an efficient national central government, and a party of burgher dignitaries striving for local autonomy in their own interests.

According to the advocates of national union and of political centralisation the Union of Utrecht 'tacitly' recognised the continued existence of a supreme power in the United Netherlands, which was to be wielded by Prince William and by his successors. According to the advocates of local autonomy led by Barneveld, the United Netherlands, as constituted by the Union of Utrecht, were a federation of sovereign States, an alliance of independent

republics.[1] Thus the lack of a written constitution had created in the young commonwealth an imperial and an anti-imperial ideal. It had created a national party, which wished to unify the Netherlands, and to convert the loose alliance into a firmly knit State, directed by a national government, and a party of local autonomy and of disintegration, which did not wish the Netherlands to be a united State, which did not wish to see a national government created, and which fought for Home Rule all round. Ever since the Union of Utrecht the two parties had struggled for supremacy.

The functions of the various governing factors also had not been clearly defined by the constitution. The national power was loosely divided between three factors—the States-General, the States Provincial and other local boards, and the stadtholders—and the absence of a clear determination of the functions of each of these three factors by a written fundamental law had caused much friction, confusion and intrigue, even in Prince William's time. Hardly had William closed his eyes when these quarrels for power and pre-eminence broke out with redoubled fury. About the very funeral of the murdered prince a violent dispute arose between the States-General and the States of Holland. The States-General claimed precedence over the States Provincial, asserting that they were invested with the sovereignty, according to the constitution. That claim was disputed by the States Provincial of Holland, which expounded the constitution in a different way, and the dispute became so heated that some politicians went so far as to speak of the death of William I. as a blessing sent by Providence, which had preserved them from a new yoke.[2]

Soon after William's death the question of supremacy became acute. In 1585, the year following that event, Queen Elizabeth had sent the Earl of Leicester with an army to the Netherlands to aid the Dutch, and the Dutch had made him governor of the United Provinces. The States of the various provinces claimed that the stadtholders, who were formerly the king's lieutenants, ought to be now their lieutenants and servants in accordance with

[1] *Archives d'Orange*, série ii. vol. ii. 59.**

[2] Bor, *Oorspronck*, 1621, book xviii. 56 ff**; Cerisier, *Histoire*, vol. ii. 530*; Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book xxviii. chap. xxxiv.

the 'spirit' of the constitution. They laid down the doctrine that the local authorities possessed supremacy over the national authorities, shackled Leicester's authority, reduced him to powerlessness and to despair, and thus forced him to take his departure. Not by the will of the nation, but by the finesse and the daring of the Dutch politicians, and especially of Barneveld, was the intended monarchy of the Netherlands converted into a republic.[1] In order to enable the local oligarchs to possess themselves of the supreme power in the commonwealth, Leicester and the youthful Prince Maurice were made to hamper and fight one another, as Barneveld mentioned with pride.[2]

The way in which the local authorities opposed Leicester, who nominally possessed the national authority, will be seen from the following characteristic example. The Spanish Netherlands suffered during 1585 and 1586 from a very great scarcity, and Leicester intended to starve the Spanish out of the country by cutting off the supply of food and of ammunition imported by sea. However, the province of Holland violently opposed that step, which interfered with their trade. The visitation of the ships by Leicester's troops excited their greatest indignation, and they never forgave Leicester for prohibiting the export of grain from Holland to the Spanish Netherlands.[3]

Leicester, instead of working with and for the provincial oligarchs, had relied on the people and identified himself with them. Therefore the hostility of the politicians knew no bounds, and they were determined to make his life a burden by constant opposition and to ruin him. They succeeded only too well. The bitter squabbles between Leicester and the Barneveld faction were caused by political intrigues, not by his incapacity or ill-will, as has been asserted by the Dutch politicians. Modern research has made that point clear.[4]

In consequence of these intrigues, Leicester was recalled and the local oligarchs became supreme in the State. The clergy and the people opposed the encroachments of the local oligarchs here and there; but their resistance gradually ceased and the reign of the burgher aristocracy began. By intrigue, the local

[1] *Archives d'Orange*, série ii. vol. ii. 58.**

[2] *Ibid.* 112.**

[3] Wenzelburger, *Geschichte*, 1898, vol. i. 716.

[4] *Archives d'Orange*, série ii. vol. ii. 58.**

oligarchy had gained supremacy in local and in national affairs, and they meant to maintain their supremacy at all costs and by all means.

'It is the greatest glory of a prince who has established a State to have furnished it with good arms, good laws, good friends and good examples.'[1] Prince William of Orange, the founder of the Dutch Republic, had left an instruction for his son Maurice in which he had said: 'I command you before all never to forget the interests of the States and the treaty of Union, to preserve with care the republican institutions and the laws which I have established, never to touch the privileges of the towns, to moderate and reconcile their differences always as their friend, and, as the first citizen of the State, to act as a general and stadtholder of the republic in such a manner that your authority can give no offence to the cities and to the people, and before all to maintain with care and respect the alliances with the King of France and the King of England.'[2] William I. had shown the right path of government to his successor not only by his instructions but also by his example, and Prince Maurice meant to carry on his father's policy in his father's spirit for the good of the country to the best of his ability. However, for a long time he was exclusively occupied in fighting the Spanish, and he had therefore no opportunity of taking an active part in political affairs. Besides, he was by birth, training and inclination not a statesman but a general. During a lengthy period matters of State had to be left to Barneveld and his followers. By the concurrence of all these circumstances the rulers of the small self-governing political units had been able to seize the direction of the national government.

After the conclusion of the truce of 1609, Maurice might, and ought to, have endeavoured to make himself the constitutional sovereign of the Netherlands, and to convert the numerous republics into a State, for he alone had the necessary prestige with the people. However, Maurice was no statesman, and he was a bachelor. Therefore he desired his half-brother Frederick Henry to become the ruler of the Netherlands and he asked Frederick Henry's mother to sound Barneveld in this matter.

[1] Machiavelli, *Principe*, chap. xxiv.

[2] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 429*; D'Estrades, *Lettres*, i. 46.**

The interview between the Dowager Princess and Barneveld was unsatisfactory. The Pensioner of Holland told the Princess that the inhabitants of Holland and of the United Provinces had always been republican at heart, that they were always ready to be led but not to be pushed, that they could be persuaded but not forced, that having shaken off the yoke of the mighty King of Spain and enjoyed the liberty which they had gained for themselves by force of arms, they were resolved not to tolerate the yoke of a prince. After a long speech in which Barneveld addressed the old lady as if she was a public meeting, he theatrically opened the annals of Holland in order to show her that in the past the Dutch had often risen in revolt against their counts and deposed them, sword in hand.[1] The same man who in 1607 had stated that the State would, through lack of unity and of a national organisation, fall into absolute anarchy and disorder,[2] had, through ambition, become the most determined opponent to the unification of the Netherlands.

There were two great parties in the Netherlands. The party of national union, the Orange party, was the party most favoured by the poor, the aristocracy and the Church; the party of local autonomy, the Barneveld party, was most favoured by the rich, middle-class burghers, merchants, manufacturers, &c.; the former was the party of the smaller provinces, the latter that of the province of Holland which exercised in the confederacy a hegemony not unlike that exercised by Prussia over the other States of Germany at the present day.[3] The oligarchs of Holland had observed that the party of union, the disfranchised masses of the people, the aristocracy and the national Church had frantically opposed the conclusion of the truce of 1609 with Spain, instinctively recognising the true interests of the nation. Therefore Barneveld and his followers wished to cripple the party of union and to acquire control over the masses of the nation.

According to a contemporary writer: 'Dutchmen are generally so bred up to the Bible that almost every cobbler is a Dutch doctor of divinity, and by inward illumination of the

[1] Neuville, *Histoire de la Hollande*, 1703, vol. i. 7 *; Motley, *Barneveld*, 1875, vol. i. 29 ff; Aubery du Maurier, *Mémoires*, 1680, 183.

[2] See page 162 f.

[3] J. F. Jameson, *Life of Usselinx*, 1887, 27.

spirit understandeth the scripture as well as they that wrote it.'[1] The Church had the greatest influence over the religious Dutch masses, it was the strongest advocate of Union, and it had thundered against Barneveld and against the conclusion of the truce. Recognising the great power of the independent Church over the masses, the oligarchs wished to make it their tool, and an opportunity of subjecting the Church to the oligarchs which soon occurred was eagerly seized upon.

A dispute about predestination between two university professors of divinity, Gomarus, an orthodox Protestant, and Arminius an innovator, had begun in 1603, but had lain dormant during the war, which occupied all minds.[2] After the conclusion of the truce the religious quarrel had spread from the university to the Church and had created two sects, or rather parties, among the clergy. As the orthodox clergymen were staunch supporters of the party of Union and of the Prince of Orange, the Arminians looked for support in the opposition camp, and the oligarchical party naturally found it to their interest to support and encourage the innovators.

The contest between the two religious sections, which at first had been purely theological, became, through the support of the oligarchical party, mainly a personal and political one, although the weapons with which it was fought were taken from ecclesiastical arsenals.[3] Therefore the religious divisions came to have much the same lines of cleavage as the political divisions. The orthodox Gomarists, or Calvinists, were generally adherents of the Orange party, while the Arminians supported the party of oligarchy.[4] In Sir William Temple's words, 'the Arminians were rather a party in the State than a sect in the Church.'[5] 'Religion had no share in the zeal of those who played the principal part in this civil war.'[6] Soon the whole people were divided into Gomarists and Arminians. Religion merely served as a party cry to the opposing sections of the community.

[1] *Observations Concerning Present Affairs*, 1612, 27.
[2] Neuville, *Histoire de la Hollande*, 1703, vol. i. 34.*
[3] Motley, *Barneveld*, 1875, vol. ii. 129.
[4] J. F. Jameson, *Life of Usselinx*, 1887, 27.
[5] Sir Wm. Temple, *United Provinces*, 1672, chap. v.**
[6] Cerisier, *Histoire des Provinces Unies*, vol. v. 176.*

The differences between the two religious, or rather pseudo-religious, sections of the nation became so acute that fights at the church door and even homicide became frequent.[1] The Arminians and innovators endeavoured to foist their views on the unwilling orthodox populace, and caused riots. Amsterdam, the stronghold of the oligarchy, naturally became also the stronghold of Arminians, but even there the Arminians were in a small minority. Not being strong enough to protect themselves against the infuriated orthodox majority, the Arminians appealed to the local authorities for protection, and the oligarchs of the provinces of Holland and Friesland, desirous of favouring their adherents, began to persecute the Gomarists, the orthodox majority, who appealed to the national authority, the council of State. The council of State took the part of the orthodox believers against the provincial authorities, but the provincial authorities declared the ruling of the Council of State null and void. They even instructed the magistrates of the individual towns not to obey the orders of the Council of State, and urged them to strengthen themselves against the generality by levying soldiers for their defence.[2]

While a lively discussion and correspondence was carried on as to the constitutional rights of the central and local authorities in religious and military matters, the magistrates favouring Arminianism began to expel the orthodox preachers from their churches and towns. The orthodox citizens were deprived of divine service. A deliberate attempt was made to convert by force the clergy and the people to that creed which was patronised by the local oligarchs. The protests of the orthodox majority against the outrage done to them were unavailing, and their position became unbearable. Gomarists loudly declared that unless means of putting down the heresy were found there would before long be a struggle that would set province against province, village against village, family against family throughout the land.[3]

In entering upon his duties Prince Maurice had sworn that he would support the reformed religion. According to the Union of Utrecht it was the stadtholder's duty to act as moderator in

[1] Neuville, *Histoire de la Hollande*, 1703, vol. i. 24.* [2] *Ibid.* 90.*
[3] Motley, *Barneveld*, 1875, vol. i. 382.

case of national differences[1]; according to the example and the instructions of William I., the founder of the Netherlands, it was the duty of Prince Maurice to re-establish unity in the distracted country. Therefore Prince Maurice resolved to act, and on his suggestion the States-General proposed that a national synod representing the whole clergy of the Netherlands should be called for the settlement of the religious quarrel. These proposals were rejected by the Arminian clergy and by the province of Holland, under the guidance of Barneveld, who claimed that 'each individual State and not the States-General possessed supreme authority in matters religious; that not the States-General but the individual provinces were entitled to call provincial synods, denying thereby that all the provinces combined formed a nation.'[2]

Words were followed by deeds. On August 4, 1617, the States of the province of Holland issued, at Barneveld's direction, a famous resolution which, because of its extreme violence, was called the 'Trenchant Resolution.' In that resolution, the holding of a national synod was condemned, recourse to ordinary law was prohibited, the towns of the province of Holland were authorised to levy soldiers for resisting the State, and, worst of all, the national troops were forbidden to obey the national authorities in defiance of the Act of Union. This resolution meant the destruction of the Union and the erection of a provincial absolutism and therefore civil war.[3]

In consequence of this resolution the magistrates of those towns who patronised Arminianism and persecuted the orthodox reformed began to levy troops for defending the rebellion against the State. Thus the pretext of sheltering a small minority was used for an armed revolutionist and secessionist movement on the part of magistrates who had appointed themselves for life, who represented a narrow class, and who nevertheless presumed to speak in the name of the people. These local levies were very unpopular. In Leyden, the cradle and stronghold of Arminianism, the troops which had been enrolled by the Arminian magistrates were attacked by the people under cheers

[1] See page 100 f. [2] Aubery du Maurier, *Mémoires*, 1754, 405.
[3] *Archives d'Orange*, série ii. vol. ii. 93.**

for the Prince of Orange.[1] The violent party strife which threatened to end either in the break-up of the Union or in civil war filled the enemies of the Netherlands with joy and their sympathisers with sorrow and alarm. The correspondence between the English Secretary of State, Sir Thomas Lake, and Sir Dudley Carleton, his Ambassador in the Netherlands, is full of letters which condemn the action of Barneveld and his party, and again and again the English Ambassador officially urged the Dutch to abolish the scandal, pointing out, in the name of the King, to the States-General that their domestic confusions would make it impossible for them to resist their enemies, that the States Provincial of Holland were to be blamed for their secessionist policy, and that a national synod for settling the war of the sects and parties was most urgently required.[2]

France was no less concerned about the threatened disruption of the Netherlands than was England. The French Ambassador delivered a speech to the States of Holland, in which he said: 'For the space of four months, since my return from France, have I been a spectator of your condition, which to my great grief I find the more deplorable because the first disease has drawn so many others after it which jointly threaten you with no less than the total and speedy subversion of your republic. In case you persist in your dissensions, you will find at last that you have been really contending for others and not for yourselves, and that you will have contributed more towards your own destruction in a few months than all the power of your enemies could effect in half an age.'[3]

The Ambassador of the King of Sweden also appeared before the States of Holland, and addressing them on behalf of the King, his master, besought them 'not to let their ecclesiastical divisions render them impotent and unable to serve themselves, their friends and allies, whilst their enemies who lay at their gates rejoiced.'[4]

The foregoing extracts make it clear that the position of

[1] Neuville, *Histoire*, 1703, vol. i. 90*; Brandt, *History of the Reformation*, 1720, vols ii. and iii.**

[2] Carleton, *Letters during Embassy in Holland*, 1775.**

[3] Brandt, *History of the Reformation*, 1720, vol. ii. 391, 447.**

[4] *Ibid.* 441–444.**

affairs in the Netherlands was a desperate one, that energetic action to save the State from disruption was urgently required.

The States-General, acting under the influence of Prince Maurice, tried to obtain the disbanding of the irregular local forces, but the local authorities refused to obey the generality. An endless correspondence was kept up between the States-General and the recalcitrant local authorities, but as remonstrances and representations proved useless the States-General at last resolved, in the beginning of the year 1618, that Prince Maurice should be directed to disband the irregular local levies, with the national troops, to dismiss the rebellious Arminian magistrates and to expel the unruly Arminian clergy.

Accompanied by deputies of the States-General, the Prince set out on his errand. The pro-Arminian towns showed some opposition; Utrecht, on Barneveld's advice, prepared for siege, and only with great difficulty did the Prince of Orange succeed in reducing the rebellious towns to obedience. By his orders, and in accordance with the instructions given by the States-General, the leaders of the Arminian movement were arrested, and the magistrates of various towns were dismissed notwithstanding the ancient usages and laws.[1]

In order to adjust the theological quarrel, a national synod, the celebrated Synod of Dordrecht, was called. Many of the most prominent German and English clergymen were invited to take part in its proceedings. The strife of the Churches was to be settled in open court before the eyes of the world. The same spirit of fairness which prompted the Dutch to invite foreign theologians caused the discussions of the Synod to extend over no less than 180 sittings. After exhaustive discussions, the national Synod condemned the Arminians, and the assembled Dutch divines concerted measures for bringing to an end the lawlessness of the Church which had shaken Church and State to their very foundations.[2]

The clerical trial was followed by a civil one. A special tribunal tried Barneveld and several other leaders of the secessionist movement, and Barneveld was found guilty, condemned to death and beheaded.

[1] Neuville, *Histoire*, 1703, vol. i. 100.*

[2] Brandt, *History of the Reformation*, vol. iii. 1–330.**

The case of Barneveld was a sad one. 'Champion of liberties rather than of liberty, Barneveld had defended his fatherland with heart and soul against the tyranny of Spain, yet the government of his fatherland was in his judgment to be transferred from the hands of the Spaniards, not to the self-governing people or to a national authority, but to the provincial corporations. For the people he had no respect and less affection; he often spoke of public right with contempt. Of popular sovereignty he had no conception. His patriotism and his ambition were provincial.'[1]

The assertion that Maurice had Barneveld executed because he strove after a crown, which has often been made by the champions of the oligarchical party, is untrue. Had the Prince been ambitious, he would have striven to place a crown on his own head, not on that of his brother, and he would certainly have taken advantage of Barneveld's disappearance and the break-up of his party to achieve his aim.

Barneveld and Maurice followed opposite ideals. While Prince Maurice was actuated by impersonal motives, Barneveld's judgment with regard to public affairs was over-ruled by his ambition, and he was so jealous of his authority that, in the words of the English Ambassador, he meant to win all or to lose all.[2] Barneveld frankly told his judges that he had deliberately followed a policy of disruption because 'he had feared that Prince Maurice was either striving after the sovereign power or that he was at least attempting to increase his influence.'[3] In other words, Barneveld worked for the break-up of the Union in order to undermine the position of the Prince, in whom he saw a rival. Barneveld was actuated by jealousy. Therefore he raged in prison, according to the testimony of his valet, against 'the foreigner who dared to dismiss respectable Dutch magistrates born in the Netherlands,' and referred in terms of contempt to William I., the great founder of the republic.[4]

Barneveld was not a statesman but a daring and unscrupulous party politician. It is true that in the hour of necessity when

[1] Motley, *United Netherlands*, 1867, vol. iv. 545.*

[2] *Archives d'Orange*, série ii. vol. ii. 129.**

[3] Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book xxxix. chap. 25.*

[4] Cerisier, *Histoire des Provinces Unies*, vol. v. 342*; Francken, *Waarachtige Historie*, 1670.

the Netherlands struggled against Spain Barneveld had fought with all his might for the interests of the nation. However, as soon as the pressure was removed he forgot that the Netherlands were a nation. While Prince Maurice fought for the rights of the nation, Barneveld fought for the privileges of a narrow class which ruled the province of Holland, not by right, but through usurpation, as has been shown.

In all loose confederations of independent States, from the Greek confederation of antiquity down to the confederation of the United States, which suffered shipwreck in the War of Secession, we meet with two opposing political currents, a centripetal and a centrifugal one, with a party working for organic national unity and a party of disintegration, and these two parties eventually come into collision. The supremacy of the party of disintegration broke up the early Greek confederations, set State against State in a fratricidal war, delivered the country first to the Macedonians and then to the Romans, and destroyed the greatness and prosperity of Greece. The victory which the national and unionist elements won by bloody civil wars over the party of disintegration preserved the Swiss confederation and the United States intact and founded the German empire. The loosely united political units forming the British empire—which is an empire only in name, for it is not a State—may, perhaps, have to go through a similar ordeal.

The Dutch confederation had been modelled on the ancient Swiss coufederation,[1] which had been established by the treaties of 1291, 1315, and 1481. The Swiss cantons, like the Dutch provinces, had revolted against the tyranny of the House of Hapsburg, and they had united themselves for the defence of personal liberty and of their municipal privileges by a treaty of union as the Dutch had done.[2] Although the confederated Swiss cantons had not formed an organic union, a State directed by a national government, but only an alliance of independent cantons ruled by cantonal governments, they had been able to preserve their independence for centuries. Consequently many Dutch politicians thought that no organic union was required for the Netherlands, and, wishing to discredit national organisation

[1] Cerisier, *Histoire des Provinces Unies*, 1778, vol. v. 6.*

[2] Adams and Cunningham, *Swiss Confederation*, 1889.

on party-political grounds, the Dutch oligarchs called national organisation oppression, a national executive head a tyrant, and meant to establish liberty by creating administrative anarchy, and universal disorganisation, called Home Rule, all round.

'Si duo faciunt idem non est idem' (if two do the same thing it is not the same thing). The Swiss preserved their independence, not because of their lack of national organisation, but in spite of it. They preserved their independence because they were very warlike and very poor. Their mighty neighbours could only lose in a war with the Swiss. When Charles the Bold marched against them with an army he was told by one of the Swiss ambassadors, according to Comines, that 'the bits of his horses and the spurs of his army were of more value than all the goods of the inhabitants of Switzerland or the ransom of all the Swiss could amount to, if all were made prisoners.[1] Poverty is an excellent protection against robbery. If the Dutch had been as poor as the Swiss were formerly, and if the territory and the harbours of the United Provinces had been useless to their neighbours, the United Netherlands might have continued to exist peacefully in their disunited unity up to the present day. As the Dutch were rich and were surrounded by powerful neighbours, who coveted their wealth and harbours, a national organisation and a strong executive were absolutely indispensable. 'The executive power must be in the hands of a monarch, because that part of the government which nearly always has to act immediately is better in the hands of one man than of several, whilst legislation is usually better in the hands of several men than of a single man.'[2]

Almost three hundred years ago John Pym, one of the greatest of English statesmen and one of the wisest of English patriots, said: 'The best form of government is that which doth actuate and dispose every part and member of a state to the common good. If this mutual relation and intercourse be broken, the whole frame will quickly be dissolved and fall in pieces,[3] paraphrasing St. Augustine's beautiful injunction, 'In necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas, in omnibus charitas.' Prince Maurice,

[1] Barante, *Ducs de Bourgogne*, livre vi.

[2] Montesquieu, *Esprit des Lois*, book ii. chap. vi.

[3] Speech of June 4, 1628, Rushworth, *Collections*, 1659, vol. i. 596.

with the instinct and the anxious care of the patriot, and a keen sense of responsibility, thought an organic union of the Netherlands necessary for the defence of the country, fearing that an enemy more powerful than Spain might at the hour of trial find the Dutch disunited and unprepared for war. He had seen the Dutch party politicians conclude a truce unfavourable to the nation because it was advantageous to themselves, and he had, during the ten years following the truce, seen the politicians constantly occupied in destroying the strength of the nation by undermining the Union. Under these circumstances it would have been a dereliction of duty on the part of the Prince to look on while the politicians were tearing the State to pieces.

Prince Maurice is not to be blamed for proceeding against Barneveld, but he may be blamed for not having acted earlier and more energetically. Besides, he ought to have followed up his victory over the party of disintegration by giving to the Netherlands a national organisation and a national government, without over-much regard to the privileges of the politicians, which these had obtained by very questionable means. Unfortunately, Maurice was no statesman, and did not know how to use the psychological moment when, after Barneveld's death, the oligarchs were ready to surrender their privileges to the State. He was satisfied to see peace and quiet re-established, and allowed the golden opportunity of giving a national constitution and organisation to the country to go by.

Between 1619, when Barneveld was executed, and 1625, the year of Maurice's death, nothing was done in order to reform the constitution of the Netherlands. All that was done was to change the men in power. Maurice apparently thought that all was mended as soon as the intriguing politicians who had striven to destroy the State were got out of the way, forgetting that the evil system which had brought about these intrigues had remained, that the preponderance of the local authorities over the national authority was destructive of union and of liberty. Although Barneveld disappeared, the bad system remained. Provincial omnipotence reasserted itself after Maurice's death, and triumphed over the stadtholders and the will of the nation.[1]

[1] *Archives d'Orange*, série ii. vol. ii. 106.**

The tardy energy of Maurice had silenced the ambitions of the local oligarchs, but it had not killed their pretensions and their hostility to national organisation and to national government. Ten years of incessant agitation and of passionate party strife about the Union between the members composing it had made many Dutchmen weary of the Union. The joy and pride of national co-operation, the old enthusiasm and patriotism for the common fatherland, which had animated the Dutch during the glorious war with Spain, were gone. The truce had weakened the tie between the local units. The sense of solidarity born of dangers undergone in common and of the community of sacrifice, the unity which had been created with blood and iron, had been greatly weakened by political intrigues. The psychological moment, the hour of enthusiasm and of trial, of joy and of suffering, the precious hour when sentiment triumphs over selfishness, the hour of laughter and of tears, when small independent brother nations are willing to give up the petty prerogatives of a petty sovereignty in order generously to merge themselves into a greater whole, the hour during which a nation can be created and firmly established, had come and had gone.

Self-interest, not patriotism, ruled the country. Every province, every district, every town, every village, strove to advance its own interests at the cost of the generality. Local interests, party interests and personal interests were paramount, and while discussion raged interminably about political trifles, in accordance with the rules of the party game, national policy and national defence, which both depend on an efficient national organisation, were neglected.

CHAPTER X

THE NETHERLANDS FOLLOW A PURELY UTILITARIAN POLICY, NEGLECT THEIR ARMY AND BECOME EXTREMELY WEALTHY

'If a ruler makes profit the principle of his conduct, all will find their pleasure in the pursuit of profit. Ministers will serve their rulers for profit, sons will obey their fathers for profit, younger brothers will respect their elder brothers for profit, and, abandoning virtue and righteousness for their guiding stars, rulers and ministers, fathers and sons, elder and younger brothers will act with a view to their personal profit. But never has there been such a state of affairs without ruin being the result.'—MANG-TSZE (Mencius), *Works*, book vi. ii. 4.

'The most natural effect of the prevalence of the commercial spirit is a selfish and interested turn of mind; a habit of measuring everything by the standard of profit and loss and a predominant idea that wealth is the main constituent both of public and private happiness.'—A. F. TYTLER, *Universal History*, book xiii. chap. viii.

'IT is the common desire of all men to advance their own profit and their constant labour to possess more than those about them.'[1] The Dutch, who had been a nation of poor fishers and fighters had, through various accidents, and especially through their war with Spain, become a nation of prosperous merchants and manufacturers. The government was, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, in the hands of an oligarchy chiefly composed of merchants, bankers, and traders, and of lawyers who, being dependent upon the trading interest for their income, acted in the interest of the merchant class. In view of the character and occupation of the men of the ruling class, it was natural that the government of the United Netherlands pursued a purely utilitarian policy two centuries before Jeremy Bentham had invented the word utilitarianism.

As the trade and industries of the Netherlands were

[1] Isocrates, *de Paco*.

exceedingly flourishing, the people were fully occupied, wages were high and Dutch recruits expensive. Therefore the Dutch had replaced Dutch soldiers with cheaper foreign mercenaries. Prince Maurice had to rely chiefly on German, French, English, and Scottish troops, and after his death in 1625, the Dutch element disappeared almost completely from the military forces of the Netherlands. The Dutch army became a purely professional force, a thing apart from the nation. The defence of the country was no longer considered to be the first duty of every Dutch citizen, but the business of the paid soldier. The interest of the Dutch citizens in military affairs disappeared.

The fact that the Netherlands seemed almost unassailable was an additional reason for the Dutch to take little interest in the defence of their country. The United Provinces formed almost an island. The sea, broad and deep rivers, vast inundations which could rapidly be produced, and mighty fortresses, the strongest in the world, converted the whole country into a huge watergirt stronghold. The war against Spain had been chiefly a fortress war, the art of military engineering had been wonderfully perfected in the Netherlands, the Dutch frontier fortresses were considered to be impregnable. An invasion of their country seemed as unlikely to the Dutch as an invasion of theirs appears now to the British. Furthermore, the Dutch felt sure that, in case of need, they would find allies.

Not land but water was the element of the Dutch. They saw in their fleet their most important weapon for defence. Their navy was the strongest in the world, and it ruled the sea. It was absolutely necessary for the security of the Dutch that their fleet should be of the greatest strength, for the Netherlands had a larger mercantile marine and a larger foreign trade than all other countries combined. Almost their whole wealth came from abroad. They possessed exceedingly valuable colonies and settlements, and they had to rely principally on foreign food. The position of the Netherlands was almost identical with the present position of Great Britain. In fact the Netherlands were the Great Britain of the time.

During the twelve years' truce, from 1609 to 1621, the commerce of the Netherlands had mightily increased. The attention of the Dutch had been concentrated upon money-

making. In 1618, the terrible Thirty Years' War, perhaps the greatest religious war which Europe has seen, broke out, and the Netherlands were drawn into that gigantic struggle. In 1621 the Spanish-Dutch truce came to an end and the Spanish-Dutch war was renewed.

About that time Lord Bacon wrote 'If we truly consider the greatness of Spain it consisteth chiefly in their treasure in the Indies, and both their treasure and their Indies are but an accession to such as are masters by sea, so that this axle-tree whereupon their greatness turns is soon cut a-two by any that shall be stronger than they at sea.'[1] Such was also the opinion of the leading Dutch merchants, who saw in an attack upon the commerce and the colonies of Spain a most profitable venture. Hence the merchant statesmen of the Netherlands vigorously attacked Spain by sea while the war on land in which no galleons laden with silver could be captured, was carried on in a very half-hearted fashion. The Dutch rapidly swept the Spanish warships from the seas, captured Spanish merchantmen and plundered the Spanish coast and the Spanish and Portuguese possessions, for Portugal remained until 1640 a dependency of Spain.

In the course of the war the commercial spirit of the Dutch betrayed itself in a very characteristic fashion. In 1624, the celebrated Piet Hein boldly attacked, with a few small ships, a large Spanish fleet in All Saints' Bay under the guns of several forts and destroyed it. Of that remarkable victory practically no notice was taken by the Dutch oligarchs. A few years later the same Piet Hein captured the Spanish silver fleet, which surrendered without resistance after two shots had been fired by the Dutch. The victory was bloodless and inglorious, but the value of the silver, gold, precious stones, pearls, spices, drugs, &c., captured, was estimated to amount to the enormous sum of twenty million florins. Therefore Hein was received in triumph by the Government, he was treated like a prince, bells were rung and bonfires were kindled, he was made vice-admiral of Holland, he was given a golden laurel wreath, and a solemn thanksgiving day was, by order of the States, celebrated throughout the land. The admiral was not a little astonished to have honours showered

[1] Bacon, Speech concerning a war with Spain.

upon him, and to be treated as a hero for an easy capture which was due to good fortune, while hardly any notice had been taken of his greatest victory.[1]

Although the Dutch ruled the sea, they lost a large number of merchant ships through the depredations of the Spanish privateers, and through a very cleverly managed enterprise. Being forbidden to frequent the harbours of Spain, the Dutch had traded with Spain under the flags of Hamburg and of other Hanseatic towns. The Spanish Ambassador in London heard of this illicit trade through some English merchants who were jealous of their Dutch competitors, and the Spanish Government sent a number of spies to Holland to investigate matters. These furnished an exact description of all the ships, merchants and captains trading with Spain under a neutral flag, and simultaneously an enormous number of Dutch ships were confiscated in the harbours of Spain.[2]

Prince Maurice died in 1625 and was succeeded by his half-brother Frederick Henry, in whom the military talent of Maurice and the statesmanlike qualities of William I. were happily blended.

The Netherlands had re-entered upon the war with Spain rather in the hope of gain than in the spirit of patriotism. The burgher politicians were more eager to enrich themselves by means of the war than to increase the greatness and the strength of their country. Therefore land operations which would not have yielded an immediate cash profit, but by which the too narrow territory of the Netherlands might have been given a most necessary extension, were discountenanced and hampered by them. The Dutch troops might easily have conquered the whole, or at least the most important part, of the Spanish Netherlands, but the merchant statesmen did not see the necessity of acquiring more land for their country, as their trade was carried on by water. Besides, they did not wish that the harbours of Flanders and Brabant should become Dutch, fearing that much trade would leave Amsterdam for Antwerp and other harbours in the Spanish provinces if these should become incorporated with the Netherlands. The ideas of the Dutch

[1] Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book xli. chap. xix.*

[2] Neuville, *Histoire de la Hollande*, 1703, vol. i. 214.*

statesmen were parochial, not national. Their patriotism was the patriotism of the purse.

In 1635 the Netherlands had concluded an alliance with France ostensibly with the object of driving the Spaniards out of the Spanish Netherlands and of dividing that country with France, but the Dutch politicians had not the slightest intention of fulfilling their part of the treaty obligations. It is true that a joint plan of campaign had been agreed upon between the two countries, but combined action was made impossible partly by the quarrels among the Dutch provinces about their contributions and the administrative chaos in the Netherlands which caused delays, and partly by the intrigues of the merchant oligarchs of the province of Holland, who, defending their trading monopoly not their country, deliberately worked against the success of their own armies.[1] While the Dutch politicians were intriguing against each other, the opportunity of striking an effective blow was lost. If the proposed junction of the French and Dutch forces had been effected in time all the principal towns of the Spanish Netherlands would undoubtedly have fallen into the hands of the allies.[2] The greater part of the kingdom of Belgium would have become Dutch.

Had it not been for the short-sighted policy of the Dutch politicians whose mental horizon was bounded by the consideration of trading profits, the foundation of a greater Netherlands might have been laid. Unfortunately the Little Holland party proved victorious and the opportunity of creating a large and mighty Dutch State able to defend its wealth against all comers and to expand in every direction in and out of Europe was lost. For the benefit of the Dutch merchants the Netherlands were to remain a small nation.

The patriotism of the Dutch had disappeared and had been replaced by the most sordid and most short-sighted selfishness. An attempt to take Antwerp was made by Prince Frederick Henry in 1638, but, to the delight of the Dutch traders, the enterprise had miscarried. During the campaign the merchants of Amsterdam had aided the enemy against their own army by the supply of war material of every kind.

[1] Cerisier, *Histoire des Provinces Unies*, vol. vi. 87.*

[2] *Mémoires de Frédéric Henri*, 1733, 174.*

When Prince Frederick Henry returned from his fruitless expedition to Antwerp, a merchant of the name of Byland was at his request arrested by the authorities for having sent a large quantity of gunpowder into Antwerp. When he was told that he had been a traitor to his country, Byland declared 'the trade must be free to all, and must not be interrupted by war. We men of Amsterdam have a right to trade wherever we please. If I should have to sail into hell in order to make a profit, I would do it even if I should risk burning my sails.'[1] Byland was not punished for his crime, either because the merchant statesmen considered the interest of the individual traders more important than the interest of the nation, or because they engaged themselves in a similar business with the enemy. A contemporary English author wrote with surprise, 'Contrary to the political rules of many countries the Dutch sell and vend their overplus of military stores to other nations. They sell arms and ammunition to the Spaniards their very enemies, conceiving it no ill trick of thrift.'[2] In the Dutch wars Dutch soldiers were habitually shot with rifles furnished by Dutch merchants.

Throughout the war the Dutch politicians, and especially those of Amsterdam, did all in their power to prevent the Prince of Orange from obtaining an important success.[3] They interfered with his general dispositions, reduced his supplies, overruled him in tactical matters, and misdirected his strategical movements. For instance, in 1631 Prince Frederick Henry was directed by the civil power to take Dunkirk, the headquarters of the Spanish privateers, and his troops were already in touch with the defending force when the civil commissioners accompanying the army became frightened at the prospect of a battle and ordered the Prince to retire with his army without delay. His protests were useless.[4] The 'Deputies to the Field Armies,' as these commissioners were called, who knew nothing about war, were always afraid of incurring any responsibility. Therefore they always opposed action. Whenever the commander on the spot wanted to engage the enemy they wished to refer the

[1] D'Estrades, *Lettres*, vol. i. 26–29.**

[2] Lewes Roberts, *Treasure of Traffike*, 99 ff, 1641.

[3] Cerisier, *Histoire des Provinces Unies*, 1787, vol. vi. 97, 107.*

[4] *Mémoires de Frédéric Henri*, 124–126.*

matter for decision to their principals, the Government at the Hague. Thus precious chances of striking an effective blow were habitually lost, rapid and effective military action was impossible, a decisive blow could not be struck, and the war with Spain on land degenerated into a long-drawn-out and therefore wasteful fortress war.

The utilitarian spirit dominated not only the warfare of the United Provinces by land and sea, but also their foreign policy. Although the cordial support of England was of vital importance to the Netherlands, the Dutch politicians did not hesitate to swindle their English ally wherever an opportunity arose. The towns of Vlissingen, Rammekens, and Briel had been given as security to England for a loan which Queen Elizabeth had granted to the Dutch. When James I., Elizabeth's successor, through his extravagance found himself pressed for money, Barneveld had taken a mean advantage of the King's necessity and lack of business acumen. He had proposed to him that he should give up the three cautionary towns against an immediate payment of 2,728,000 florins. Although he was entitled to 8,000,000 florins[1] King James was foolish enough to accept the usurious proposal, and Barneveld and the politicians of the United Provinces were very proud of the good bargain which they had struck. King James never forgave the Dutch, who came to be considered in England as a nation of tricksters. Incidents of a similar nature frequently occurred between the Netherlands and England and embittered their relations.

In the pursuit of a profitable policy the Dutch estranged France also. Notwithstanding the debt of gratitude which the Netherlands owed to France, their ancient ally and protector, the Dutch sent in 1621 a ship loaded with arms and ammunition of war to the French rebels of Languedoc. They did not even take the trouble of giving to the ship a private character, but allowed it to fly the flags of Holland and of the Prince of Orange. So openly was the enterprise undertaken that the ship fell into the hands of the French Government, which found in it twenty-two guns, 8,000 rifles and carabines, 2,500 pistols, 2,500 pikes, 500 cuirasses, 500 helmets, a huge quantity of powder and shot

[1] Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, 1659, i. 3.

and other war materials sufficient to equip a small army.[1] This treacherous act was naturally greatly resented by France, especially as France at that very time maintained troops in the Netherlands for the protection of the Dutch against the Spanish, and assisted the Netherlands with money.

Both the Government and the people of the Netherlands concentrated all their efforts upon money-making, and the surrounding circumstances were exceedingly favourable to their success. While from 1618 to 1648 all Europe was being ravaged by a merciless war between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, and while England groaned from 1625 to 1649 under the ill-starred rule of Charles I., and was rent asunder by civil war, perfect peace and toleration reigned in the interior of the United Provinces, for the war with Spain on land was fought chiefly in the Spanish Netherlands. All the industrial and commercial competitors of the Dutch were crippled through war. Countless merchants and workmen fled from the ruined districts of Germany, France, the Spanish Netherlands and England to the Dutch Netherlands, where they found a peaceful asylum. Providence had given to the Dutch the monopoly of the world's commerce and the Dutch made the fullest use of their opportunities.

Although refugees from all countries were allowed the free exercise of their religion the government did not follow the policy of laissez-faire in religious matters. On the contrary, it kept a watchful eye on all new faiths and sects in order to prevent the propagation of doctrines likely to be dangerous to society or to the State. Sir William Temple informs us: 'If the followers of any sect grow so numerous in any place that they wish to found a public congregation, to purchase a place of assembly and to bear the charge of a pastor or teacher, they go and propose their desire to the magistrate of the place where they reside and these inform themselves of their opinions and manner of worship. And if they find nothing in these either destructive to civil society or prejudicial to the constitution of their State, they easily allow it, but with the condition that one or more commissioners shall be appointed who shall have free admission at all their meetings, who shall be both the observers and the witnesses of all that is acted or preached among them,

[1] Neuville, *Histoire de la Hollande*, 1703, vol. i. 168.*

and whose testimony shall be received concerning anything that passes there to the prejudice of the State, in which case the laws and executions are as severe as against any civil crimes.'[1] The Dutch policy of toleration evidently had its limitations. Lawlessness under the cloak of religion was not tolerated.

While, through the fortune of war, the Dutch Netherlands had obtained the monopoly of the world's trade, the Dutch governments strove to develop the home trade of the Netherlands, being aware that a prosperous home trade is a necessary basis for a large and profitable foreign trade. Therefore the authorities cheapened navigation and transport throughout the country and provided exchanges, markets, storehouses, and official money-lending institutions.

Through the exertions of the Government the Dutch obtained the best inland transport system in the world. Nowhere could goods be carried at a cheaper rate per mile than in the Netherlands, largely because water carriage was not left entirely to private enterprise, for free competition in such matters inevitably leads either to an amalgamation of the competing interests or to traffic agreements between them, in order to abolish free competition, and a monopoly. Unrestrained competition is ruinous to the competitors and therefore logically leads to an unrestrained monopoly.

A regular service of cargo boats existed throughout the Netherlands. These boats had to travel at regular times along the canal routes whether they were loaded or not. Canal traffic was carefully regulated in the same way in which railway traffic is regulated at the present time in nearly all civilised countries, except in Great Britain, where the producers are left at the mercy of a railway ring. By stringent government regulations, uniformity of conditions, cheapness of carriage, convenience of service, celerity of travelling and despatch in forwarding goods by water were enforced.[2] By means of these canals an inhabitant of Rotterdam could breakfast at Delft or The Hague, dine at Leyden and sup at Amsterdam. On these canals a most prodigious inland trade was carried on throughout the Netherlands

[1] Sir Wm. Temple, *United Provinces*, 1672, chap. v.**

[2] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 502.*

and with every part of France, Flanders and Germany. When the canals were frozen the Dutch travelled over them on skates, and despatched their goods on sledges.[1]

A German economist has pointed out that the canal system of the Netherlands experienced its most important extension between 1609 and 1648, the time when the country stood politically at the height of its power,[2] and it is quite natural that that should have been the case. The political expansion and the economic development of a country are apt to coincide, as a glance at modern Germany and modern Japan shows, for power and prosperity are twin sisters. Hence it follows that a great nation cannot lose its economic preponderance without losing its power and its greatness as well, for the richest nation can build the largest and strongest fleet. The length of the national purse determines the strength of the national defensive forces. With some limitation Hobbes' maxim 'Wealth is power and power is wealth' is true.

The manufacturing industries of the Netherlands which had become exceedingly prosperous through the decay of Flanders and Brabant, of which details have been given in Chapter VII., continued to flourish and expand during the first half of the seventeenth century. As the wars on the Continent and in England had crippled or killed nearly all foreign competition, the Netherlands became the workshop of the world.

The Thirty Years' War was as beneficial to the manufacturing industries of the Dutch as the Napoleonic wars were to the manufacturing industries of Great Britain. Prices and wages were very high in the Netherlands, but high wages and high prices did not harm the Dutch industries; for these, through the employment of labour-saving machinery, the cheapness of inland carriage and the abundance of money were so far in advance of the industries of other nations that no foreign nation could compete with the Dutch. As all the inhabitants of the United Provinces were producers, and as they were compelled to buy food and raw material in foreign countries, the higher the prices were at which their goods could be sold abroad the greater was their profit, the more cheap foreign goods could they buy.[3]

[1] MacCulloch, *Commercial Dictionary*, Art. 'Canals.'

[2] Roscher, *Ackerbau*, 1903, 165.

[3] Laspeyres, *Volkswirtschaftliche Anschauungen*, 1863, 87.*

As the Dutch had practically the world's monopoly in manufacturing, they saw no reason for engaging in cut-throat competition among themselves. While the merchants and manufacturers of other nations were underselling and ruining each other, for the sake of making a small profit, the Dutch merchants and manufacturers acted in unison, kept prices at a remunerative level, and concluded agreements for the ruin of their foreign competitors by systematically underselling them, and thus strengthening the Dutch monopoly. The American Trusts and German Kartelle, perhaps even the dumping tactics of the latter, were anticipated by the Dutch of the seventeenth century. An English economic writer of the time informs us: 'The cloth buyers, the principal merchants of Holland, have lately obtained octroy, which is privilege and immunities, of the States, to assemble themselves, and to keep courts and make regulations for their trade, principally designed to confront and oppose the English merchant adventurers' trade. These people, as they are born and bred in a united country, so does their nature and disposition incline much to a union and communion in trade. In so much as oftentimes they are able to work their feats by confederacy and combination against an incorporation in our nation. For they wisely consider that their interest is involved in the public interest, whereas in our nation men commonly prefer their own particular to the common good.'[1] The individualistic English merchants could not compete with the powerful Dutch rings.

In matters of foreign commerce, the merchant politicians followed an active and energetic policy similar to that which is pursued at present by the United States and Germany. The foreign trade of the Dutch was not by any means left unprotected at the mercy of foreign nations, but was carefully fostered and regulated by advantageous treaties of commerce. Dutch statesmen habitually stipulated in their commercial treaties that foreign States should not exact higher impositions from Dutchmen than from their own subjects, and in many instances they succeeded in having unduly high impositions removed by an energetic policy of reprisals.[2]

[1] Misselden, *Free Trade*, 1632, 82.

[2] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 514.*

The economic policy of the Dutch was directed by business men and by able professional administrators. Only in matters political and military was amateur bungling allowed. In the words of Elie Luzac: 'The commercial treaties made with foreign Powers and the various ordinances and regulations issued by the State and municipalities prove that the great progress of commerce and navigation in Holland was due to the care which the government exercised in selecting for public appointments only individuals able to fill their charges with ability and integrity.[1]

Lewes Roberts, an English merchant and writer on economic matters who lived in the seventeenth century, testifies that 'the traffic of the Netherlands into foreign parts is with much benefit countenanced from the States,'[2] and another great English merchant, Samuel Lamb, a contemporary of Roberts, informs us that the following were the causes of the prosperity of the commerce of the Netherlands.

'I. The statesmen sitting at the helm in Holland are many of them merchants, bred in trade from their youth, improved by foreign travel, and acquainted with all the necessities of commerce. Hence their laws and treaties are framed with reason.

'II. In Holland, when a merchant dies, his property is divided equally among his children, and the business is continued and expanded, with all its traditions and inherited experience. In England, on the contrary, the property goes to the eldest son, who often sets up for a country gentlemen, squanders his patrimony, and neglects the business by which his father had become enriched.

'III. The honesty of the Hollanders in their manufacturing and commercial dealings. When goods are made or put up in Holland they sell everywhere without question, for the purchaser knows that they are exactly as represented in quality, weight, and measure. Not so with English goods. Our manufacturers are so given to fraud and adulteration as to bring their commodities into disgrace abroad, and the Dutch have the pre-eminence in the sale of their manufactures before us by their true making to their very files and needles.

[1] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 512.*

[2] Lewes Roberts, *Treasure of Traffike*, 1641, 111.

IV. 'The care and vigilance of the government in the laying of impositions so as to encourage their own manufacturers; the skill and rapidity with which these are changed to meet the shifting wants of trade; the encouragement given by ample rewards from the public treasury for useful inventions and improvements, and the promotion of men to office for services and not for favour or sinister ends.' [1]

The foregoing details are most interesting and are worth bearing in mind, for they contain the essence of a wise economic policy. They show that the economic policy of the Dutch was then very similar to that pursued by Germany at the present day.[2]

It should be added that the honesty of the Hollanders and the absence of fraud and adulteration praised by Lamb were not due to the inborn virtue of the Dutch manufacturers and traders, but to stringent government supervision similar to that exercised at present in Germany. The policy of laissez-faire gives freedom of action not only to honest but also to fraudulent merchants and manufacturers, and while the latter grow rich at the cost of the community, the great native industries suffer by losing their reputation abroad, fraud begets fraud, successful swindlers find imitators, and the character of all the great national industries is lowered. Individualism, by tolerating, and therefore encouraging, fraud and deception, benefits the unscrupulous minority at the cost of the honest majority; it enriches a few individuals and discredits and impoverishes a nation.

Although the Dutch paid the greatest attention to the development of their trade and their industries, they did not by any means neglect their agriculture, but greatly improved it. Hence they became the most scientific agriculturists in the world, and the Dutch system of converting salt-water marshes into the most fruitful agricultural soil was copied in England and in Germany. Dutchmen drained the eastern counties of England and converted waste land into the richest fields. A contemporary English writer tells us: 'Even among us the Dutch shame us with their industry, which makes them seem as if they had a faculty from the world's creation to make dry land appear out of

[1] Douglas Campbell, *The Puritan in Holland*, 1892, vol. ii. 336.

[2] *Modern Germany*, 1905.

water. They win our drowned grounds which we cannot recover, and chase back Neptune to his own old banks.'[1]

English agriculture owes much to the Dutch. 'The improvements effected in English husbandry during the course of the seventeenth century more than doubled the population. Nothing, I am persuaded, enabled that increase to be effected during the reign of Elizabeth so much as the fact that the emigration of the Flemish refugees improved in some degree English husbandry. The Flemings and Hollanders were the teachers of the new agriculture. They adopted the artificial grasses and cultivated wonderful roots in the fields long before their neighbours adopted either of these capital discoveries.'[2]

The Dutch fishing industry also was wonderfully prosperous and expanded greatly during the first half of the seventeenth century.

While war raged in all countries of continental Europe and in England the maritime preponderance of the Netherlands increased still further. The Dutch became the acknowledged rulers of the sea, notwithstanding repeated efforts on the part of their enemies to destroy that maritime supremacy.

More than one-third of the tonnage of the Dutch shipping engaged in foreign commerce was occupied in the Baltic trade, and that important trade mightily increased during the period under consideration. In 1640, 1,700 Dutch ships passed through the Sound, while in 1531 only 310 had taken that route.[3] All Europe envied the Dutch for their Baltic trade.

Being unable to defeat the Dutch either on land or on sea, or to take from them their great colonial trade, Spain tried to destroy their Baltic trade.

The Courts of Madrid and Vienna had often planned the destruction of the wealth, and with the wealth the power, of the Netherlands, by closing to them the Baltic Sea; and General Wallenstein, the celebrated Austrian commander, who in 1628 assumed the title of 'Commander of the Baltic Sea,' on November 20 and 24, 1627, and on January 6, 1628, gave orders stopping the export of grain from the harbours of the

[1] *A Brief Character of the Low Countries*, 1652, 71.

[2] Rogers, *History of Agriculture and Prices*, 1866, vol. v. 64.

[3] Naudé, *Getreidehandelspolitik*, 1896, 372.*

Baltic. The grain from the Baltic was then as important to the Netherlands as North American wheat is now to England. Wallenstein's plan was a bold one. He intended to create a Baltic fleet, with the help of the towns on the Baltic, to conquer Denmark, close the Sound to Dutch shipping, and master the Netherlands by at the same time cutting off their food supply and destroying the largest branch of their trade. Wallenstein's attempt at conquering the Netherlands in the Baltic might have succeeded, but the great general was murdered in 1634, and thus the Dutch were freed from a very great danger.[1]

In 1631, the King of Sweden, acting under the advice of Oxenstjerna, tried to capture the Dutch trade in the Baltic by creating a royal trade monopoly, and forbidding the export of grain by private people. This attempt at despoiling the Netherlands also miscarried, through lack of an adequate navy.[2]

Force may capture wealth. Therefore force only can preserve it. Although it is not quite correct to say power is wealth, it is undoubtedly true that power may be converted into wealth, if it is judiciously applied. The Dutch ruled the sea as absolutely as the English ruled it in the time of Napoleon I., and, under the protection of their mighty navy, the maritime trade of the Netherlands increased enormously. In 1631, Cardinal Bentivoglio, the well-informed papal nuncio, wrote: 'By common judgment the number of their vessels is esteemed to be almost as great as that of all Europe besides. So many ships fraught with all sorts of merchandise come from all parts of the world to meet and settle themselves as it were in Amsterdam, that that town may in these days be esteemed to be the most frequented and merchant-like city, not only of Europe, but even of the whole world.'[3]

In 1634, the Dutch possessed no less than 34,850 ships, measuring 2,002,500 loads. Of these ships, 20,000 were ships used in the marvellously developed inland navigation of the Netherlands, of which details have already been given. Of the remaining 14,850 ships, 6,000 were trading in the Baltic, 2,500 travelled to the North Sea, 1,000 ships carried on the commerce of the Rhine and Meuse. The commerce with England,

[1] Naudé, *Getreidehandelspolitik*, 1896, 353.*
[2] Gfrörer, *Gustav Adolf*, 1863.
[3] Bentivoglio, *Historical Relations*, 1652, 12.**

Scotland, Ireland, and France was carried on by 1,500 ships, that of Spain, Barbary, and the Mediterranean by 800 ships; 300 ships traded to Africa, Brazil, and the East and West Indies; 250 ships travelled to Russia and Greenland, and 2,500 ships were employed in various directions.[1]

While the largest trade of the Dutch was that carried on with the countries of Europe, by far the most profitable branch of their commerce was the Indian trade, which they had conquered from Spain and Portugal. The Dutch East India Company became, by the conquest of the Spanish-Portuguese colonies, by maritime warfare, by privateering and by legitimate trade, so prosperous and powerful that it maintained larger fleets and armies than did many a large State. Its store of war material was enormous. It possessed more than 4,000 bronze and iron cannons. Many of the warlike expeditions which the East India Company undertook were most profitable. For instance, in 1617, Spilbergen arrived in Zeeland with two ships in which he brought captured merchandise to the value of 22 tons of gold.[2] In those days the Dutch used to express large figures in tons of gold.

The ease with which the East India Company could make money by making use of its military and naval forces unfavourably influenced its commercial business. The directors of the company became accustomed to making very large profits, without labour, and disdained to exert themselves in carrying on an extensive trade at a moderate profit. Instead, they endeavoured, as monopolists usually do, to carry on a limited trade with a very large profit. With this object in view, they laboured with all their might to reserve to their company the monopoly of the precious spice trade, and they began to destroy the clove trees everywhere, except in Amboyna, the seat of their power. Furthermore, they bribed the surrounding princes by annual subsidies into acting likewise, and these set about to destroy the property of their own subjects in the interests of the Dutch. This plan was begun about the year 1631, and was steadfastly pursued during more than a century. Dutch squadrons yearly visited the Spice Islands, to suppress the growth of cloves, which in their native countries spring up in the greatest luxuriance, and in

[1] Vreede, *Inleiding Nederlandsche Diplomatie*, 1856.

[2] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 175.*

consequence of this policy—a policy which was carried on with much iniquity and bloodshed—the spice country was converted into a petty farm, to the detriment of the natives and to that of the European consumers. The proceedings of the Dutch aroused great indignation in all European countries, which found their policy both injurious and contemptible.[1]

The same system was followed with regard to the production of nutmegs, and of all those spices which were peculiar to the Moluccas.

Considering the paying of very large dividends, and the gaining of enormous profits, to be a matter of course, the Dutch East India Company made hardly any effort to introduce fair commercial principles in its management. The whole object of the company was to hinder competition, and to obtain the monopoly of particular products. When they had obtained that monopoly, they took care to limit the supply brought to market, and to raise its price to many times its real value. They succeeded for a short time in obtaining the monopoly of the pepper trade, and they immediately raised the price of pepper by about 100 per cent. to eight shillings a pound. In fact, it has been asserted that the Dutch in the course of a few years made a profit of not less than 3,000 per cent. on this single article.[2]

The enormous success of the Dutch East India Company in exploiting Asia, and making war upon Spain and Portugal in that part of the world, led to the creation of a similar company for the exploitation of America and Africa. The States-General gave a charter to the West India Company by which privileges similar to those given to the East India Company were granted. The States subsidised the new company in a most generous manner, and gave it the monopoly of commerce on the African coast down to the Cape of Good Hope, on all the coasts of America, and on all the islands lying in the American seas.

The capital of the company was to be 7,200,000 florins, divided into shares of 6,000 florins each, and its administration, like that of the East India Company, described in another chapter,[3] consisted of five boards, representing Amsterdam, Zeeland, Rotterdam, Hoorn, and Frisia and Groningen combined. The central

[1] J. Crawfurd, *Eastern Archipelago*, vol. iii. 388.
[2] *Ibid.* 363.
[3] See page 132 ff.

authority was a board of directors, to which Amsterdam sent eight directors, Zeeland four directors, and the remaining three boards two directors each, but the States-General reserved to themselves the right of adding one or several directors.[1]

The Dutch West India Company made great conquests on sea and land in both continents. Its military operations proved most profitable. Within a few years this association took the greater part of Brazil from Portugal, it fitted out 800 armed trading ships and war ships, and it captured from the Spaniards and Portuguese 545 ships, which were supposed to be worth 90,000,000 florins. Its greatest success was probably the capture of the Spanish silver fleet by Piet Hein, of which details have been given.[2]

These wonderful naval successes were at the time considered to be a more or less permanent source of profit to the company. Therefore the West India Company did not proceed in financial matters with that prudence and caution which the East India Company had observed, but distributed huge dividends without making adequate provisions for the future. For instance, when Piet Hein had taken the Spanish silver fleet the West India Company distributed a dividend of fifty per cent. This proceeding was much blamed by the more conservative merchants, who were aware that the company's position was insecure, because much money had to be spent in developing the extensive colonies which it had captured, in creating and fortifying settlements and trading stations, building harbours and warehouses, and in extending its legitimate trade.[3]

Success had turned the heads of the Dutch. The cautious spirit, which had been formerly one of their chief characteristics, was rapidly disappearing. As gold could be won without trouble, the mercantile class had to some extent become demoralised. Everybody wanted to be rich quickly. The rage for money-making had bereft men of their reason; prudence and common sense were thrown to the winds; the younger generation did not heed the warnings of the older men who had become rich by hard work. The Indian merchants and their friends were rolling in wealth

[1] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 61.*

[2] See page 187. [3] Pufendorf, *Histoire Générale*, 1721, vol. iv. 141

the Dutch spirit of thrift had disappeared, legitimate business was being replaced by speculation, and speculation by gambling.

The Dutch were fond of their ornamental gardens. Their favourite flowers were tulips, for which high prices were paid by the rich. The fact that many bulbs can be produced from a single specimen led speculators to believe that unbounded wealth could be realised by propagating the more expensive sorts of tulips, and a wild speculation in tulips set in. Between 1634 and 1637 when the tulip mania, one of the most curious booms on record, was at its height, the price of single bulbs went from a few florins to many hundred florins. Sometimes 2,500, and once 4,000 gulden, were paid for a single specimen.[1]

Through the marvellous development of their fishing trade, their manufacturing industries, their carrying trade, and their European and trans-oceanic commerce, the Netherlands had become exceedingly opulent. Amsterdam was the centre of the world's trade and the world's wealth. In 1631 Cardinal Bentivoglio wrote, 'Amsterdam has as it were monopolised all the merchandising both of Europe and the Indies, and has almost quite undone both Antwerp and Lisbon.'[2] The commercial prosperity of the Netherlands was at its zenith. Amsterdam was in the seventeenth century what London was in the nineteenth.[3]

The Dutch towns grew with marvellous rapidity; yet there were not enough houses to contain the people, and many were compelled to live on boats. The Russian Embassy which visited the Netherlands in 1615 marvelled at the wealth of the Dutch, and reported that the whole country was like one connected town.[4] The cities of the Netherlands were the most magnificent in the world, and people from all countries flocked to the Low Countries to admire their beauty. An English traveller reported, 'Their houses, especially in their cities, are the best eye-beauties of their country. For cost and sight they far exceed our English, but they want their magnificence. Their lining is yet more rich than their outside; not in hangings, but pictures. which even the

[1] Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book xliii. chap. ix*; Wenzelburger, *Geschichte*, vol. ii. 190.

[2] Bentivoglio, *Historical Relations*, 1652, 12.**

[3] Rogers, *History of Agriculture*, 1866, vol. v. 132.

[4] Van Kampen, *Geschichte*, vol. ii. 334.

poorest are there furnished with; not a cobbler but has his toys for ornament.'[1]

All the arts flourished in the Netherlands. Rembrandt, Albert Cuyp, Paul Potter, Berghem, Mierevelt, Franz Hals, the two Teniers, Ostade, Adrian Brouwer, Philips Wouverman, Gerard Dow, Terborch, Metsu, van der Meer, Koninck, Weenix, van Goyen, Wynants, Ruysdael, and many others flourished in the first half of the seventeenth century, and their works adorned the houses of the rich. The Netherlands were not only the centre of the world's trade and wealth, but also the centre of the world's art.

The Dutch masses were exceedingly prosperous. The workers were fully employed, the wages paid in the Netherlands were the highest in Europe, and beggary was unknown; for the Dutch authorities and munificent private people amply provided for all who were unable to work. 'You would think, being with them, you were in old Israel,' writes a contemporary Englishman, 'for you find not a beggar among them. Nor are they mindful of their own beggars alone, but strangers also partake of their care and bounty. If they will depart they will have money for their convoy. If they stay they have work provided. If unable to work they find a hospital.'[2]

The Dutch were not only the wealthiest, the happiest, and the most artistic, but also the best educated people in the world. That the people were so productive and so enterprising was largely due to the fact that they were an educated people. There was hardly a Netherlander—man, woman, or child—who could not read and write. In the burgher families it was rare to find boys who had not been taught Latin, or girls unacquainted with French. Capacity to write and speak several modern languages was very common.[3] In the seventeenth century Leyden was the University centre of the whole Protestant world, and among the scientists and scholars of Europe the Dutch were easily first.[4] Undoubtedly the inhabitants of the Netherlands were at the time the most highly cultured, the most civilised, and the most progressive nation in the world.

[1] *A Brief Character of the Low Countries*, 1652, 19. [2] *Ibid.* 73.
[3] Motley, *United Netherlands*, 1867, vol. iv. 266.*
[4] Treitschke, *Politik*, vol. ii. 245.

A governing class of merchants and manufacturers who ruled the Netherlands on purely utilitarian principles, who subordinated considerations of State to considerations of trading profits, had, without a national organisation, without a national government, without a national army, and without a national navy, defeated the mightiest empire then existing. In the beginning of the eighty years' war with Spain the citizens of the Netherlands had, with incredible valour, defended their country with their own hands, but during the last few decades of the struggle the nation had abstained from fighting its own battles. The fighting patriotism of the Dutch had given place to the patriotism of the purse, which manifests itself in the unheroic action of paying the taxes. Foreign mercenaries had fought the Netherlands' battles for freedom on land, and the Dutch chartered companies, the East and West India Companies, had inflicted the most telling blows on sea, while the Dutch nation had stayed at home, being absorbed in money-making.

During the latter half of the war the Dutch had defeated the Spaniards by the power of the purse, and, since the supply of foreign mercenaries was practically inexhaustible, the power of the purse seemed greater to the Dutch than the power of the sword. Therefore, the Dutch merchant politicians began to argue that the richest nation can hire the largest armies and the strongest fleets; that the war with Spain had shown that a national administration and executive and a national army and navy were quite unnecessary; that a new era, an era of commercial expansion, had arrived; that the merchant was stronger and more clever than the statesman and the soldier, and that merchants acting individualistically would easily sweep away the armies, the fleets, the commerce, and the industries of well-organised military States. In the eyes of the Dutch commerce was more important than statesmanship, wealth was better than the manly virtues, which are usually summed up in the word patriotism, and administrative anarchy, called individualism, was better than national union and national organisation.

The prevalence of these views caused one of the most extraordinary projects of modern times to be brought forward. People living in the inland provinces and towns of the republic began to argue that the naval defence of the country did not

concern the whole nation, but merely the merchants and shippers. The East and West India Companies had proved themselves most redoubtable antagonists on the sea. Therefore it was thought that the naval defence of the Netherlands could safely be entrusted to a large limited company, which should be the representative of the mercantile interest. Not the nation, but merchants and shippers, should pay for the upkeep of the fleet. The maritime defences of the Netherlands should be abandoned to the traders. The shopkeeper should rule the sea.

In the year 1629 the following plan was placed before the States-General, and referred by these to the individual provinces.

A chartered company was to be created which was to receive the monopoly of all insurance business. All ships and goods entering and leaving the Netherlands were to be compelled to insure with the company at certain fixed rates, which were to yield a large profit. Uninsured merchandise imported into the Netherlands was, on entering the country, to pay duty equal to the fixed insurance premium, and insurance values were to be assessed by Dutch assessors.

The Insurance Company was to possess five chambers and five boards of directors domiciled in the principal harbour towns. The company was to be organised on the model of the East and West India Companies.

The funds of the company were to be furnished partly by private individuals, who took shares in the company, partly by the States-General, who were to contribute to it forty tons of gold, or 4,000,000 florins. One-third of that sum was to be a free gift to the company, but the remaining two-thirds were to share with the proprietors in the profit or loss made.

The proposed company was, by its heavy insurance premiums, to make enormous profits, a large part of which was to be used for providing and maintaining an efficient navy on behalf of the nation. The States were to provide the nucleus of the company's fleet by the gift of twenty ships of the line and four frigates, with all the necessary equipment, armament, and ammunition, while the company was to provide at least sixty well-found and well-equipped warships. The company was to be given sovereign authority on the seas, and was to be empowered to conclude alliances and commercial treaties with foreign States, to build

forts and war harbours, to appoint governors, military officers, and judges, establish colonies, &c. The company was regularly to render account of its actions to the States-General, and to act in accordance with the instructions received from the States-General.

In this manner the Netherlands wished to rid themselves for all time of the burden of empire, and to make the naval defence of the country and of its colonies a profitable business.

The project of converting the national navy into a money-making concern was very attractive to many minds, and it was warmly supported by all those Dutchmen who objected to paying taxes for national defence. However, after lengthy discussions it had to be dropped, because the maritime provinces and towns which would have had to bear the whole of the expenses for naval defence strongly opposed it. As no agreement could be reached, the States-General appointed a special commission to take the views of individual merchants throughout the country, and as the majority of these naturally objected to burdening with compulsory insurance premiums the trade by which they lived, the project was at last reluctantly abandoned. Nevertheless, whenever discussions with regard to taxation for naval defence took place, the inland provinces regularly brought forward their pet project of an insurance company, wherewith they wished to shift the burden of empire and of naval defence on to the shoulders of the merchants and shippers.[1]

Bagehot wrote: 'We look on State action not as our own action but as alien action, as an imposed tyranny from without, not as the consummate result of our own organised wishes. The natural impulse of the English people is to resist authority.' A similar spirit prevailed in the Netherlands, and that spirit brought about their ruin. Individualism, the curious doctrine which places the individual above the State, the part above the whole, and which opposes not only State action but the State itself, was in excelsis in the Netherlands. According to the views of Dutch individualists the Netherlands and the Dutch Empire were to be run on business lines, limited companies were to rule the world for the benefit of wealthy Dutch capitalists. However, the vision of limited companies conquering the world for the Dutch merchants,

[1] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 128.*

and the idea that rule by chartered company was more efficient, more economical, and before all, more profitable than national rule, received a rude shock when the mighty Dutch West India Company, which had formerly defeated the fleets of Spain and Portugal, was defeated by the Portuguese and deprived of its conquests.[1] Easily won, easily gone. Brazil was lost by the Dutch after having been only fifteen years in their possession.

The loss of Brazil might have been a warning to the Dutch merchants. Nevertheless, their faith in the policy of laissez-faire in matters political and in individual action, and their distrust of all governmental action on behalf of the nation, continued unabated. *Quos Deus vult perdere prius dementat.*

[1] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 193.*

CHAPTER XI

THE NETHERLANDS HOLD THE BALANCE OF POWER IN EUROPE AND, FOLLOWING A PROFITABLE POLICY, TREASONABLY ABANDON THEIR ALLY

'In countries where the commercial spirit prevails people traffic in all human actions and in all moral virtues. Even the smallest acts, acts which humanity commands, are reduced to the money standard.'—MONTESQUIEU, *Esprit des Lois*, xx. 2.

'The mercantile spirit prevails in the Netherlands to such an extent that all affairs of state are reduced to a question of profit and loss, as if they were mere transactions of commerce.'—Ambassador BRASSET to MAZARIN, April 1650.

IN 1630 the Netherlands had concluded with France a very important treaty directed against Spain. By that treaty the French had agreed to assist the Dutch with troops and money, while the Dutch had bound themselves not to conclude a truce or a peace with Spain except in conjunction with France. This engagement was repeatedly renewed and solemnly confirmed, especially in 1644, when it became clear that the great war which had devastated Europe since 1618 was drawing to a close through the exhaustion of the combatants. By these treaties the interests of France and the Netherlands were completely merged. Both countries agreed to support one another, and to maintain an inviolable union in their dealings with Spain. All negotiations with Spain were to be carried on jointly, and no agreement with Spain was to be concluded by either Power except by mutual consent.[1]

The Prince of Orange meant honourably to fulfil the conditions of the treaty, as may be seen from the following curious episode, which is illustrative of the fact that the most important and most delicate diplomatic negotiations are often carried on, not by

[1] Aitzema, *Saken van Staet*, 1669, vol. i. 971 ff.; vol. ii. 960 ff.**

an ambassador or some other prominent personage who works in the strong light of publicity, but by some obscure individual whose activity is not noticed, and whose action can easily be disavowed. On November 7, 1645, a Capuchin friar, disguised as a soldier, secretly approached Prince Frederick Henry on behalf of the King of Spain, and endeavoured to induce the Prince by great promises to use his influence towards the conclusion of either a separate peace or a truce between Spain and the Netherlands. The Prince asked the friar to meet him again on the following day, and arranged that the French Ambassador should, during the interview, be secreted in a room adjoining his own. On the next day the second interview took place. The negotiator again made the most tempting offers to the Prince, trying to induce him to work for a separate peace between the United Provinces and Spain, and he was about to withdraw when the Prince called in the Ambassador, who, to the dismay and confusion of the monk, had heard everything.[1] This act, which was perhaps more generous than worldly-wise, proves that the Prince meant to adhere to the engagements of the State with absolute loyalty. Had the Spanish negotiator approached the States-General instead of the Prince, his offers would hardly have been declined.

The States-General, though nominally representing the Dutch nation, represented in reality only the commercial and the capitalist interests of the Netherlands,[2] and the Dutch merchants and capitalists wished for peace in order to be able to extend their trade, and to develop the colonies which they had won in the course of the war. The richest of the Dutch provinces, the province of Holland, with Amsterdam, the commercial capital of the world, was more anxious for a cessation of hostilities than were the poorer provinces, and Holland, relying on her wealth and her impregnable position, meant to have her own way, without regard to the wishes of the other provinces.

The province of Holland had habitually pursued a purely selfish and deliberately anti-national policy, and had placed her own interests high above those of the nation. On August 8, 1637, Aerssen van Sommelsdyk reported to Prince Frederick Henry that the States of Holland refused to recognise the authority of the States-General, and endeavoured to persuade the

[1] Basnage, *Annales*, 1726, vol. i. 11.*

[2] See page 168.

other provinces to follow their example, and to abolish the supremacy of the Union over the individual provinces. Even the rights of national taxation were, according to Aerssen, to be taken away from the national authorities. In October of the same year, Aerssen announced that the province of Holland had decided that the supreme judicature appertained to the individual provinces, and not to the Council of State, and he complained, 'The misfortune is that everybody in this country looks after his own interests, using the public welfare as a convenient stepping-stone. Hence, individual interests form a conspiracy against the nation, and the State is deprived of its authority. The only way to maintain the Union among the United Provinces is to restrict the power of the individual provinces, and make it impossible for them to strengthen themselves at the cost of the nation. Unless this is done, all the authority of the State will vanish.' [1]

The merchants of the province of Holland were so anxious to increase their trading profits that they were determined to secede from the Union unless peace was concluded. At the very time when Prince Frederick Henry exposed the Spanish intrigue to the French Ambassador, the merchant politicians of Holland loudly expressed their determination to make peace with Spain, notwithstanding their recent solemn engagement with France. In case of need Holland would make peace with Spain. The other provinces could continue the war if they cared to do so. On October 30, 1645, de Wilhem wrote to Aerssen from The Hague, 'The people here are prepared to treat with Spain and to conclude either a peace or a truce at any price and under any condition. I mean especially those of the province of Holland, for they declare quite openly that they will bring this matter to an end, even if they should be compelled to cut themselves adrift from the other provinces.' [2]

So eager were the wealthy merchants of the province of Holland to end the war, even if they should have to break the treaty engagements recently entered upon, and dishonour the name and fame of their country, that they were not ashamed of insulting the Prince of Orange because he wished to follow a national and an honourable policy. On April 2, 1646, Ambassador Brasset reported from The Hague to Cardinal Mazarin that

[1] *Archives d'Orange*, série ii. vol. iii. 49.** — [2] *Ibid.* vol. iv. 27.**

'the Prince had had the patience to allow three deputies of the province of Holland to tell him to his face that all he did in conjunction with France was done only with the object of oppressing them. The patience of any other man would soon have been at an end, but the Prince of Orange knows the humour of these people, and knows that time rather than argument will bring them to their senses.' [1]

The politicians of the province of Holland not only threatened to secede from the Union unless peace was immediately concluded, and attacked the Prince of Orange for his loyalty to the nation, but began an intrigue with Spain in the midst of the war; they accepted bribes from the Spaniards, and became the advocates and defenders of Spain. On May 28, 1647, Ambassador Servien reported to Mazarin, 'Arguments are no longer of any use in this country, and one is compelled either to obey the will of these gentlemen, or to employ stronger means' (which is the diplomatic expression for larger bribes) 'for gaining them than those which have been used for alienating them from us. The Spanish have never done anything more beneficial to themselves than to act as they have done, and to convert their former enemies into supporters.' [2]

The politicians of the province of Holland hated the Prince who, as the representative of the nation, was compelled to oppose the selfish policy of Holland. Therefore an anti-Stadtholder party arose in Holland, in which burgomaster Bikker, of Amsterdam, of whom we shall hear again in the course of this book, played a prominent part. The anti-Stadtholder party became very powerful, especially as Prince Frederick Henry, worn out by more than forty years of work and enfeebled by old age and disease, became, towards the end of his life, less and less able to resist the unceasing attacks of the party of disintegration.

In countries which do not possess a written constitution, precedents, even if they are utterly bad, and if they have been created by the most questionable means, are apt to acquire the force of positive law. Therefore those who are able to exercise great power in a State which has an unwritten constitution, although they may be possessed of power only for a fleeting moment, can permanently alter constitutional usage—for an

[1] *Archives d'Orange*, série ii. vol. iv. 28.** [2] *Ibid.* 38.**

unwritten constitution is only another word for constitutional usage based upon tradition and precedents—by creating dangerous precedents, and thus they may ruin the State. Such a dangerous precedent was created by the wily and persevering politicians of Holland.

The province of Holland had become practically omnipotent in the Union by its great wealth, which made it an indispensable support to the poorer and smaller provinces, and by its frequent threats to withdraw from the Union unless the other provinces obeyed Holland's will. Holland had habitually abused its preponderance, and when the Hollanders entered by themselves upon unauthorised negotiations for peace with Spain, the anomaly of their proceeding was considered to be almost sanctioned by precedent. It should be added that Holland's threats to secede from the Union were perfectly serious, for that province, owing to its strong natural position for defence,[1] its vast wealth, and its huge fleet, believed itself powerful enough in case of need single-handed to defend itself against the world.

The States of Holland had lost all sense of proportion. They meant to pursue a utilitarian policy, a commercial policy, a business policy, a profitable policy in the sense of the shopkeeper, without heeding the ultimate consequences of a penny-wise policy which, for the sake of an immediate cash profit, neglected the strength of the country, estranged its friends and converted them into dangerous and implacable enemies.

Merchants, and especially merchants who carry on a speculative business, are by the nature of their business compelled to take short views in trade. Therefore it was only natural that the merchant politicians of Amsterdam, who did a very speculative business in their private capacity, took short views in politics as well and speculated in politics from day to day as they did in commerce. They declined to exercise foresight, and thought more of the immediate profit of their commercial and political ventures than of the lasting welfare and the political future of the nation. Hence Holland habitually followed a short-sighted hand-to-mouth policy.

It was clear to the far-sighted that the Netherlands were the strongest Power only because the large Powers of Europe were

[1] See pages 186 and 303 f.

for the moment crippled by war, and they looked with anxiety into the future, fearing that the position of the United Provinces might become a precarious one when the great European States should have recovered from their wounds. Therefore far-sighted Dutchmen of the national and unionist party, led by the Prince of Orange, strove to increase the strength of the country by converting the loosely-connected political units into an organised State; they wished to enlarge the basis of the State by extending the boundaries of the country, by the absorption of the whole or a part of the Spanish Netherlands, and they desired to remain on the best terms with France, the powerful ally of the Dutch, whose support seemed to them invaluable.

These wise and far-sighted plans were unfortunately frustrated by the ruling oligarchs of the province of Holland.

It had been the principal aim of Dutch policy during the seventeenth century to play off against one another the various Powers which fought among themselves for the dominion of the Baltic Sea, and not to allow any of the combatants to become strong enough to threaten the shipping trade of Amsterdam.[1] The policy of setting one nation against another, the policy of the balance of power, had proved successful in the past, and the merchant politicians meant to rely for safety in the future rather on the divisions among their mighty opponents and on their skill in increasing these divisions than on their own strength. They intended to depend for security more on diplomacy than on their armed strength, because the former is cheaper than the latter.

There was some reason for thinking that the Netherlands would be able to maintain their position by making skilful use of the divisions among the Powers of Europe. The favourable strategical position of the United Provinces on the flank of France, Germany, and the Spanish Netherlands, had increased their importance in the eyes of other countries. Their support or their friendship assured to Spain, or to England, or to France, preponderance on the Continent, while the great prosperity of the Netherlands, due to their commerce, which embraced the whole world, enabled them to raise larger sums for war than any

[1] Naudé, *Getreidehandelspolitik*, 1876, 376.*

other European nation could raise. The success with which the republic had fought against Spain, and the prestige which it had won by its victories, had gained for it the first rank in Europe. Therefore the alliance of the Netherlands and their diplomatic support were sought everywhere, especially as the memory of William I., the founder of the republic, was still in the minds of all. The Netherlands were believed to be a firmly-knit State, and to be invincible. The prestige of the Netherlands, the military credit of the republic, as Lord Salisbury would have said, was at its zenith.

The Thirty Years' War had created a balance of power among the States of Europe, and the Netherlands held and controlled the balance of power exactly as England does at the present day. That group of Powers which had the support of the Netherlands would have supremacy in Europe. Hence an alliance with the Netherlands was desired by all States, and they were courted by all. Therefore Aerssen wrote on September 20, 1639, to the Prince of Orange, 'At the present time you are more important to France than all her other allies taken together, and you can take advantage of that position.' [1]

As every nation was eager to be allied with the Netherlands, the Dutch thought that their position was absolutely secure. However they were to find out that it is dangerous for a nation to rely for security, not on its own armed strength, but on the mutual jealousies of its possible enemies and on ephemeral diplomatic combinations which are based on these jealousies, especially when it is so wealthy as to excite the envy of all other nations.

The position of the Netherlands was undoubtedly an insecure one, although, for the moment, they held the balance of power in Europe. While the immediate neighbours and possible enemies of the Netherlands, France, Germany and England, possessed large sparsely peopled territories, which rendered possible an unlimited increase of their population within their own frontiers, the tiny country of the Dutch was the most densely populated spot on earth. National expansion was impossible for the Dutch unless the territorial basis of the State was considerably broadened.

[1] *Archives d'Orange*, série ii. vol. iv. 109.**

In the course of the lengthy war with Spain the inhabitants of the Spanish Netherlands, the present Belgium, had again and again asked their Dutch neighbours to receive them into their Union, but these offers had been declined by the merchant politicians, the Little Holland party, who were most influential in the State, and who feared that the amalgamation of the two Netherlands would reduce their share in the world's commerce and decrease their trading profit. It is true that the majority of the States-General favoured the partition of the Spanish Netherlands between France and the United Provinces,[1] and that treaties for effecting a partition of the Spanish Netherlands had been signed by France and the Dutch Netherlands, but the influential province of Holland had, sometimes by open opposition and sometimes by secret scheming, checkmated and crippled the Dutch army and prevented it from seizing that part of the Spanish Netherlands which was to be the share of the Dutch.

It had been the constant wish of Prince Frederick Henry to conquer Antwerp for the Netherlands, and to provide the Dutch with that magnificent deep-water harbour; but his repeated attempts upon that town were frustrated through the narrow jealousy of Amsterdam and the machinations of the province of Holland.

When the Spanish-Dutch war was drawing to an end, a last opportunity of making the Netherlands a great nation occurred. The French wished that one of the conditions of peace should be that the Spanish should evacuate the Spanish Netherlands, and that these should be divided between France and the Dutch Netherlands. The people in the Spanish Netherlands themselves wished to be incorporated into the Dutch Union, and, as late as 1648, requested the Dutch to annex their country. However, all was in vain. The voices of the patriots who pleaded for national expansion were silenced, the Little Holland party triumphed. The Dutch merchant politicians wanted the Spanish Netherlands to remain in Spanish hands, partly because they opposed the territorial aggrandisement of the Netherlands, for the reasons given, partly because they did not wish to see France strengthened by the possession of part of the Spanish Netherlands. The Dutch politicians, desirous to 'balance' the power of their

[1] Cerisier, *Histoire des Provinces Unies*, vol. vi. 102.*

neighbours, deliberately worked for the weakening of France their ally, and for converting the Spanish Netherlands into a buffer State between that country and the Dutch Netherlands.

The negotiations at Münster which eventually led to the Peace of Münster were exceedingly protracted. The States-General had sent a large number of ambassadors, so that all the provinces might be able to treat jointly as well as singly with the foreign Powers. They were by no means united in purpose, and very soon the Spanish negotiators discovered that the representatives of the provinces of Holland and Zeeland did not mean to be bound by their previous treaty with France, and that they were ready to conclude a separate peace with Spain in flagrant violation of their treaty engagements and of the Union of Utrecht.[1]

The representatives of France noticed the intrigues which were being carried on behind their backs between the Spanish and the Dutch, but their protests were unavailing. The province of Holland succeeded in seducing and coercing the other provinces into agreeing to the conclusion of a separate peace with Spain, and after lengthy discussions the Netherlands made peace with Spain, 'without regard to the respect due to public faith and treaty obligations,' as Ambassador Brasset wrote.[2] By the peace treaty of 1648 the Spanish Netherlands were left in the possession of Spain, and France was deprived by her ally of the territorial increase for which she had fought.

After the conclusion of peace the King of France wrote to the Dutch that their treaty with Spain was very prejudicial to the treaty which they concluded with France in previous years, and he recalled his ambassador, who left The Hague on May 23, 1648, in order not to be present at the peace celebration.[3]

The news of the conclusion of peace was at first greeted with universal joy in the Netherlands, but soon an awakening took place. Many regretted that the country had broken faith with its traditional ally, and their regret was the keener as it was generally believed that the Dutch could, without difficulty, have driven the Spanish out of the Spanish Netherlands.[4] The people instinctively felt that the treaty of peace, though

[1] See page 99 f. [2] *Archives d'Orange*, série ii. vol. iv. 38.**

[3] Neuville, *Histoire de la Hollande*, 1703, vol. iii. 11.* [4] *Ibid.* 10.*

advantageous to the merchant politicians of Holland, was harmful and disgraceful to the nation, and unjust to France and to their former compatriots in the Spanish Netherlands. Perhaps their conscience foretold them that the gross perfidy of the Dutch towards their ally would not remain unpunished.

During their long war the Dutch had received invaluable aid from both France and England. By their indecent haste in concluding peace with Spain, and by the ill-treatment of the English in the Indies—the massacre of Amboyna in 1622 was still in everybody's mind in England—the Netherlands lost the friendship and protection of both their allies and turned them into secret enemies.

The Dutch promptly received from France a small preliminary punishment as an earnest of greater ones to come, which distressed them very greatly because it touched their purses. The Franco-Dutch commercial partnership, of which details have been given,[1] which had been concluded in 1596 and which had been repeatedly renewed and continued, had been of the very greatest benefit to the trade of the Netherlands. When the Netherlands broke faith with France the Franco-Dutch customs union came to an end and the French closed their frontiers to Dutch wares.[2] Moreover, France tolerated, or rather encouraged, the depredations of French pirates who, since 1648, preyed on the Dutch shipping in the Mediterranean and caused enormous losses to the town of Amsterdam.[3]

Necessity knows no law, for it is the highest law. Therefore the ancients have told us that almighty Jove himself had to obey Necessity. The action of the Dutch in breaking their treaty with France would have been justified had they been compelled by necessity to do so; it would have been justifiable had they acted in the best interests of the nation. But unfortunately no extenuating circumstances could be pleaded. The Dutch merchant politicians, pursuing a mercenary, selfish policy, were not only traitors to France but also to their own country. They broke their treaty with France, not from national and statesman-like motives, but from party-political motives and from greed after gain.

[1] See page 127. [2] *Richesse de la Hollandé*, 1778, vol. i. 166.*

[3] Cerisier, *Histoire des Provinces Unies*, vol. vi. 284.*

The Netherlands attempted to justify their treacherous conduct by explaining that the partition of the Spanish Netherlands would have been impossible. The smaller provinces pleaded that the pressure of the province of Holland had been irresistible, and that they had been carried away by that province against their will. The province of Holland endeavoured to attribute their action to circumstances, to their poverty and to the Prince of Orange. However, no excuse can avail against the inexorable law of history. 'Flagrant ingratitude is not only unlovely, but also unwise, in statesmanship as well as in private life.'[1] The crime which the Dutch politicians, guided by selfish and sordid motives, had perpetrated against their ally, and still more against their own country, had to be expiated.

By the Treaty of Münster of 1648, the King of Spain recognised the United Netherlands as an independent sovereign State upon which neither he nor his successors had, or ever would have, any claims. It should be observed that the fourteenth article of the Peace of Münster contained the cruel stipulation that the Scheldt in all its branches, its mouths and other openings into the sea, should be for ever closed to the Belgian provinces. This restriction, which completed the ruin of the once magnificent harbour town of Antwerp, was rigidly enforced till 1783, and was abolished only in 1792 when the armies of the French Revolution over-ran Belgium.[2] Thus the Dutch condemned their brothers-in-arms against the tyranny of Spain not only to permanent servitude by refusing to receive them into the Dutch Union, but actually went out of their way to ruin them for ever. The Dutch people had fought Spain during eighty years, not with the object of creating a great nation, but for the purpose of strangling Antwerp for the benefit of the merchants of Amsterdam.

The Peace of Münster carried the United Provinces to the summit of their political and economic power. To foreign nations the Dutch seemed unassailable by land, they ruled the sea, they possessed the most valuable colonies, they had many powerful allies, they enjoyed freedom of trade in all the seas and among all nations of the world, they were by far the most

[1] Bismarck, *Gedanken und Erinnerungen*, chap. xii.

[2] Phillimore, *International Law*, 1871, vol. i. 194.

industrious, the wealthiest, and the most highly-cultured people. The Netherlands were the leading country in the world.

The world might have become Dutch instead of Anglo-Saxon had the Dutch made use of their great opportunities, but the magic hour was lost never to return. While the Dutch politicians were arguing and intriguing against each other, greatness and power, wealth and colonies, happiness and empire slipped out of the grasp of the Netherlands, and were lost to them for ever.

CHAPTER XII

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE PARTY OF NATIONAL UNION AND THE PARTY OF DISINTEGRATION LEAD TO A *COUP D'ÉTAT*, AND THE POLITICIANS OF THE PARTY OF DISINTEGRATION BECOME ALL-POWERFUL IN THE COMMONWEALTH

'It is my firm opinion that the happiness of the constituent parts of the State is better secured by the health and vigour of the whole, than when each separate member is thriving whilst the public welfare totters. Be the situation of any private person as prosperous and as strong as his heart can wish, he must be ruined too if his country should be ruined.'—Speech of Pericles, THUCYDIDES, book ii.

'The causes of division and faction in every commonwealth proceed most commonly of idleness and peace, and that which uniteth is fear and war.'—Sir WALTER RALEIGH, *The Cabinet Council*, xxv.

THE conclusion of the truce with Spain in 1609 had been immediately followed by a cleverly-disguised attempt made by the party of local autonomy and of disintegration led by Barneveld to destroy the loose union of the Netherlands and to make themselves supreme in the State. Through the timely and energetic action of Prince Maurice that attempt had proved unsuccessful, as we have seen in Chapter IX. The conclusion of a definite treaty of peace with Spain in 1648 was immediately followed by a similar but more open attempt on the part of the oligarchs of the province of Holland to subvert the Union, to destroy the existing feeble national organisation and national control, and to make the local politicians all-powerful. To the permanent and irremediable injury of the Netherlands, this second attempt succeeded. The party politicians destroyed the imperfect national organisation, but in exalting themselves they at the same time reduced their country, which had been the richest, the strongest and the happiest country in the world, to poverty, powerlessness and misery.

Barneveld had died on the scaffold for his treasonable attempt against the Union and the unity of the Netherlands, but his spirit and the policy of disintegration which he had represented, and which had found expression in the Charter of the Netherlands, the Great Privilege,[1] had survived him. During the twenty-five years during which the gentle Prince Frederick Henry was stadtholder, the oligarchs of Holland had gradually and stealthily increased their power, as politicians are apt to do, especially when no written constitution sets clearly defined bounds to their ambitions, and they longed for an opportunity to make themselves supreme in the State. That opportunity arose when in 1648, a short time before the Treaty of Münster was signed, Prince Frederick Henry died.

For many years past, the province of Holland had steadily undermined the Union by undermining the authority of the National Assembly, the States-General. Towards the end of 1639 the Netherlands had made a solemn declaration that the majesty and dignity of the States resided not in the States-General, 'as foreigners imagined,' but in the local districts composing the confederation.[2] In 1643 the Province of Holland had formally instructed their representatives in the States-General never to assent to any resolution without previously consulting the province, in order to hamper the national legislation and executive and to make the national power represented by the national assembly and the stadtholders a tool in the hands of the provincial oligarchs.[3] The province of Holland was busy 'evolutionising' the unwritten part of the Dutch constitution in such a manner as to make herself supreme among the provinces and to reduce the remaining six provinces to the position of vassals. It was Holland's aim to make the whole nation subservient to the merchants of Amsterdam.

In foreign politics also Holland strove to direct the commonwealth in accordance with the wishes of the mercantile interest. In the foregoing chapter it has been shown that the Peace of Münster in 1648 was the work of the province of Holland, which, after having entered upon an intrigue with Spain, had argued,

[1] See page 39 ff.

[2] Aitzema, *Saken van Staet*, 1669, vol. ii. 623.** [3] *Ibid.* 910.**

worried, and coerced the other provinces into the conclusion of a peace.

In 1630 the stadtholdership and the other charges held by Prince Frederick Henry had been made hereditary dignities.[1] Nevertheless, Prince William II., the son and appointed successor of Frederick Henry, was, for a considerable time after his father's death, invested neither with the stadtholdership nor with the supreme command of the army and navy. By deliberate, unnecessary and vexatious delays the politicians of the province of Holland intended to make the Prince feel that he was dependent on their goodwill and that he was expected to be an obedient servant rather to the province of Holland than to the Dutch commonwealth. Not satisfied with inflicting this humiliation upon the young Prince, the Hollander politicians embittered and mortified him still further by opposing his wishes in every direction and by making his nomination dependent upon his subscribing not only to the existing regulations regarding his office, but also to such regulations as the States might think good to add in the future.[2] In other words, Prince William was asked to relegate all power and authority to the local politicians before being invested with that power and authority which, in consequence of the arrangements previously made, he could claim as due to him by right. The highest executive officer of the Netherlands was asked to hold his office on sufferance and under conditions which would have been humiliating to a minor official.

Prince William was treated with deliberate and cruel indignity by the Hollander politicians for two reasons. In the first place, the politicians were jealous of the prestige which the office of stadtholder and of commander-in-chief conferred upon its occupant, whoever he might be. In the second place, they disliked the Prince himself, because he was an able and distinguished man.

'Modest ignorance,' said Cleon, 'is a much surer support than genius which scorns to be controlled, and the duller part of mankind generally administer public affairs much better than

[1] Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book xlii. chap. vii.*

[2] Cerisier, *Histoire des Provinces Unies*, vol. vi. 296.*

men of genius and understanding.'[1] Politicians who have the highest office in the State in their gift preferably select for it an insignificant man. Therefore the presidents of republics are, as a rule, not men of genius able to lead, but obscure men of average or less than average intelligence and ability, mere figure-heads, who are likely to be led by the ruling party-politicians. The presidents of the United States, France and Switzerland are as a rule obscure citizens. President Roosevelt is a rare exception, but he obtained his high position by accident. The politicians had intended to 'shelve' him, and he became president the first time, not through election, but through the murder of his predecessor, President McKinley.

Prince William was an exceedingly gifted and high-spirited youth, a born ruler of men, possessed of an admirable presence. He had married Mary, daughter of Charles I., King of England, and grand-daughter of Henry IV., the greatest king of France. William's relationship with the two leading monarchies of the time made him doubly disliked by the self-assertive burgher politicians of Holland long before his father's death.

William II. became stadtholder and captain and admiral-general of the republic under the most difficult circumstances. The intriguing politicians of the Little Holland party, plotting either to abolish the office of stadtholder and captain and admiral-general altogether, or to make it a sham, and to make the representative of the nation a tool in their hands, had grudgingly and in an insulting manner given that high office to a gifted, high-spirited, hot-blooded, inexperienced and impetuous youth of twenty-three years, whose relations occupied some of the greatest thrones in Europe. As the politicians of the party of disunion meant to abase to the utmost the proud holder of the highest position in the State, whose office it was to defend the Union,[2] a conflict between the Prince and the anti-unionist Little Holland politicians was unavoidable.

An occasion for further weakening the national organisation and the position of the Prince soon occurred, and was eagerly seized upon by the politicians.

When, in 1648, the Treaty of Münster had ended the war between Spain and the United Provinces, the States-General

[1] Speech of Cleon, Thucydides, book iii. [2] See page 100 f.

immediately applied themselves very industriously to the regulation of their revenues and to the introduction of economies in their warlike expenditure. The province of Holland in particular was anxious to lessen the expense of the military establishment, and proposed that a considerable part of the army should immediately be disbanded.[1]

Various reasons prompted the politicians of Holland to work for the abolition of the offices of stadtholder and commander-in-chief and for an immediate and drastic reduction in the strength of the army. In the words of a contemporary English writer, the Dutch politicians thought 'they had no longer need of a stadtholder or a captain and admiral-general, that now they were going to live in entire calm and plenty, that they should be no more attacked from abroad, nor have an occasion of keeping an army at home, but that their business now was to live in ease and enjoy the fruit of past labour. Hence those who looked upon a stadtholder and captain-general as altogether unnecessary to the State in the future thought it would be better to ease their country of that great expense. However, there were others who had a more ambitious aim, desiring to abolish the high offices held by the Prince of Orange because they intended to transfer to themselves the power held by him.'[2]

A contemporary French general wrote: 'The Dutch politicians, judging of the future by the past, and making that mistake by which all those nations which have been fortunate have perished, believed that the peaceful times would be of long duration; they took no precautions towards more stormy times, and turned their whole energy towards abasing the Prince of Orange.'[3]

The representatives of the province of Holland were very eager to undermine the authority of the States-General and of the Prince, who together formed the national authority. With this object in view they set about the destruction of the national army. The suicidal policy of the oligarchs of Holland was loudly applauded by those burghers whose mental horizon was limited

[1] Burrish, *Batavia Illustrata*, 1728, vol. i. 204.

[2] *Historical Remarks upon the late Revolutions in the United Netherlands.* London, 1675, 5.*

[3] Comte de Guiche; *Mémoires*, 1744, vol. i. 39.*

by thoughts about their business profits, whose only political aim was the indiscriminate reduction of the national expenditure, and who had no time to think of the safety of the State.

'Peace and economy' became the rallying-cry of the Little Holland politicians, and especially of the wealthy burghers of Amsterdam, who strove to control and direct the policy of the whole of the State for their own benefit. Amsterdam in the seventeenth century, like Manchester in the nineteenth century, claimed that it represented the nation, and endeavoured to establish a government on a plutocratic basis, nominally for the benefit of the nation.

The movement for reducing the army, under the plea of economy, which sprang from the desire to make the Prince powerless and to give to the highest executive officer of the republic the position of a liveried servant to the party politicians, arose in Amsterdam, and was guided by Cornelius Bikker, a former burgomaster of that town. The Prince of Orange, supported by the States-General and the Council of State, opposed the proposals of the Bikker party, and urged that, as peace had not yet been concluded between France and Spain, and as the French and Spanish armies were near the gates of the republic, it would be prudent to defer the disbanding of the army until the political outlook was clearer.[1] Besides, the disturbed state of England—Cromwell had not yet ended the Civil War, and King Charles I. was still alive—was another disquieting factor, and an additional reason for the Netherlands to be ready for war.[2]

The other provinces also urged upon the province of Holland that it was inexpedient and dangerous to disarm the Netherlands while France, Spain, Sweden and Germany were still under arms; that it was unjust that so many gallant captains and officers, who had hazarded their lives for the Netherlands, should be so ill requited for their devotion as to be dismissed without notice; that Holland was acting unconstitutionally and in defiance of the Union of Utrecht in disbanding and cashiering part of the common forces—the national army—in opposition to the will of the nation.[3]

[1] Burrish, *Batavia Illustrata*, 1728, vol. i. 204.
[2] Neuville, *Histoire de la Hollande*, 1703, vol. iii. 16.*
[3] Aitzema, *Notable Revolutions*, 1653, 2.*

In spite of the representation of all the national authorities and of the other provinces, the province of Holland reduced that part of the national army over which it had control. The navy was treated in a similar manner, for immediately after the peace of 1648, the number of warships, which had formerly been from 130 to 150, was reduced to forty. The men were dismissed, and technical improvements and repairs which were required were not undertaken.[1]

The determination of the politicians of the province of Holland to weaken the national tie, the national organisation and the national army in order to further their own ambitions, created dismay in France, who desired the Netherlands to remain a powerful factor in the political system of Europe. Ambassador Brasset complained to Mazarin on November 2, 1648: 'The evil intentioned mean to destroy the army because Prince Maurice frustrated their intrigues with the help of the army.'[2]

The high-handed and arbitrary proceedings of the province of Holland were greatly disliked by the States-General, and 'their High Mightinesses, after lengthy debate, were of opinion that the province of Holland had broken the Treaty of Utrecht, as the troops, having been raised for the general defence of the United Provinces, ought not to be disbanded without the concurrence of the other provinces. Hence, they resolved by a majority of votes to request the provincial council of state to assemble in order to revoke the orders of the States of Holland and to give instructions for the payment of the troops as usual.'[3]

Evidently it could not be allowed that the security of the republic should depend on the will of the political leaders of a single province, and that a single province should treat the authority of the nation represented in the States-General with contempt, or that a single province should arrogate to itself the right to dismiss at its own will and discretion a part of the national troops who had taken the oath of obedience to the generality.[4]

In Dyer's words, 'The question had arisen as to the

[1] *Handbuch für Deutschland's Seeinteressen*, 1900, 161.
[2] *Archives d'Orange*, série ii. vol. iv. 41.**
[3] Burrish, *Batavia Illustrata*, 1728, vol. i. 206.
[4] *Archives d'Orange*, série ii. vol. iv. 42.**

reduction of the army, and what regiments were to be dismissed; and on these points the States of Holland were at complete variance with the Stadtholder. They had shown a disposition to assert the right of self-government, on this and other subjects, so that it even became a question whether the supreme power was to be vested in the States-General, or whether each province was to form an independent State.'[1]

As the representatives of the province of Holland proved deaf to all arguments advanced by the generality, the States-General resolved to appeal from the representatives of the province of Holland sitting in the States-General to their principals, the individual political units of which that province was composed. Such an appeal from the representatives to their principals was usually undertaken if one or several of the provinces could not agree with regard to some measure decided upon by the generality. Therefore the States-General resolved that 'a very solemn deputation' should be despatched to all the cities and members of the province of Holland 'to persuade them by all conceivable means and arguments to refrain and desist from all separate or particular disbanding, reducing or altering of the forces in service, and sworn to the generality, and not to intermeddle with anything that may be undertaken or afoot to the contrary.' This errand was entrusted to the Prince of Orange, who was commissioned to select the members of that deputation, to direct the proceedings, and 'to take care to preserve the common peace and tranquillity, to maintain the Union of the Netherlands, and to resist and to prevent all contrary practices and designs.'[2]

The 'very solemn deputation' of persuasion duly went on its errand, but it proved a failure. Some of the towns of the province of Holland requested that no deputation from the generality should be sent to them. Nevertheless the deputies, with the Prince at their head, proceeded with their mission. The magistrates of some towns refused to assemble and to discuss the affairs of the Union with the deputies of the States-General; some refused to admit the national deputation into their cities; some requested them not to enter their towns. Amsterdam refused to receive the Prince of Orange with the

[1] Dyer, *History of Modern Europe*, 1901, vol. iii. 370.

[2] Aitzema, *Notable Revolutions*, 1653, 2 ff.*

honours due to him. The 'solemn deputation' had not improved matters, but had made the conflict worse. The secessionist party had added insult to injury.

When the Prince of Orange saw that the differences between the province of Holland and the republic were becoming greater and more dangerous from day to day, that no arrangement between the commonwealth and the provinces was possible, because the politicians of the province of Holland meant to go their own way without any regard for the nation, continued violating the Treaty of Union, and refused even to listen to the generality, he at last resolved to take that step by which alone the break-up of the Union could be avoided. Acting in accordance with the precedent which his uncle, Prince Maurice, had set during the Barneveld conspiracy,[1] he arrested six of the most dangerous politicians, who had led the campaign against the Union, and sent them in custody to the Castle of Loevestein. Among these men was the burgomaster of Dordrecht, Jacob de Witt, the father of John and Cornelius de Witt, who later on played so prominent and so pernicious a part in the Dutch Commonwealth.

The heart of Holland was in its purse. As the political unrest had begun to unfavourably affect the trade of Amsterdam, which, like Manchester, habitually followed rather a profitable and a commercial policy than a national and patriotic one, the province of Holland resolved to submit in military matters to the will of the Union. On August 24, 1650, Ambassador Brasset wrote to Cardinal Mazarin, 'Holland has agreed that in future no individual province may claim to dismiss troops without the unanimous consent of all the other provinces, and if disagreement should arise on this point the decision is to be in the hands of the Prince of Orange, or those who will succeed him in the government of these provinces. It may be asserted that by that step the Prince has made a master-stroke, and that he has accomplished more in three weeks than his late father has effected in the course of his whole life.'[2] Apparently the timely energy of William II. had borne fruit.

While the conflict between the nation and the province of Holland was at its height, Prince William had formed the design

[1] See page 179 ff. [2] *Archives d'Orange*, série ii. vol. iv. 52.**

of surprising Amstersdam with his army in order to depose those magistrates who had shown themselves most hostile to the Union, and who had most actively worked for its overthrow. Unfortunately for the future of the Netherlands, his attempts at surprising Amsterdam miscarried through a trifling incident which is very interesting in this, that it shows that the greatest political events often arise from the most insignificant causes. Everything had been foreseen and carefully arranged. The troops for the surprise of Amsterdam had been assembled with secrecy and despatch, and their road had been carefully mapped out. On their line of march there was a spot where the crossing of several roads might confuse the troops marching in the dark of night, and lead them astray. Therefore it had been arranged that a surgeon, living near this crossing and on the road which had to be taken, should, on the night of the enterprise, indicate to the troops the right road by placing a light in his window. That surgeon unwittingly ruined the enterprise, and, perhaps, with that enterprise his country. The appointed night was dark and stormy and favourable for approaching Amsterdam unnoticed. In fact, it was so wild a night that the surgeon felt certain that no one would be abroad. Therefore he extinguished the light in his window at eleven o'clock. Failing to be guided by the light, the troops lost their way, Amsterdam received timely warning of their approach, closed her gates, and inundated the surrounding country.[1] Thus the attempt of the Prince to bring union into the disunited Netherlands and to give to the seven independent provinces a national organisation, national cohesion and a national policy miscarried.

A few days after this unfortunate occurrence, Prince William died, being at his death only twenty-four and a half years old. So suddenly and at so opportune a moment for the politicians of the party of disintegration did his death take place that the people would not believe that he had died from natural causes. Cardinal Mazarin was of opinion that the Prince had been poisoned by his enemies.[2] Although nothing definite is known on the subject, it seems not unlikely that the Cardinal's surmise was correct.

[1] Wagenaar. *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book xlv. chap. xxiii.*

[2] Cerisier, *Histoire des Provinces Unies*, vol. vi. 343.*

There can be no doubt that throughout the conflict the province of Holland had been in the wrong. By separately disbanding part of the national troops, Holland had violated the Union. 'The Prince of Orange had succeeded in creating order and unity in the Netherlands, and had, by his great courage and prudence, suppressed the faction which had disturbed the State from the very beginning of his government. Had not death prevented him, he would, without any doubt, have established the State in peace and quietness at the cost of those who by their jealousies and divisions had endeavoured to bring disorder into it.'[1] It may be that William's action was unconstitutional, but as the official guardian of the Union he was certainly justified in endeavouring to destroy a conspiracy which threatened the State with civil war. *Malus usus abolendus est.* 'No usage, law, or authority whatsoever is so binding that it need or ought to be continued when it may be changed with advantage to the community,'[2] for *salus publica suprema lex.*

> Diseases desperate grown
> By desperate appliances are relieved,
> Or not at all.[3]

With William II. died the greatness and the prosperity of the Netherlands. The semblance of unity which his energy had created disappeared immediately after his death.

The sudden death of the Prince was greeted with jubilation by the merchants of Holland, and they gave vent to their exultation in the most unseemly rejoicings. Bonfires blazed in almost every town of the province, and medals insulting to the memory of the dead Prince were struck by the triumphant oligarchs.[4]

It cannot too strongly be pointed out that in the conflict between the House of Orange and the oligarchical politicians of Holland, both in 1618 and in 1650, the trouble arose from the same cause. In both cases the conflict was created by the fact that the central power of the State—that is to say, the combined authority of the States-General and the stadtholder—the national and unifying element came into collision with the anti-national

[1] *Historical Remarks upon the late Revolutions*, 1675, 7.*
[2] Paley, *Elements of Political Knowledge*, chap. iii.
[3] *Hamlet*, act iv. scene iii.
[4] Basnage, *Annales*, 1726, vol. i. 177.*

and anti-unionist elements of the United Provinces.[1] In 1618 and in 1650 the conflict between the unionist and the anti-unionist party was a conflict between a larger patriotism and party selfishness, between a party striving after national greatness and order and a party fighting for the preservation of their privileges, the disruption of the commonwealth and administrative anarchy.

William II. died childless, but a week after his death his widow was delivered of a son, 'whom it pleased Almighty God to make the glorious instrument of delivering the kingdom of England from Popery and arbitrary power,' as the English Bill of Rights of 1689 put it. To the joy of the oligarchical party, the politicians had the field all to themselves.

'The death of Prince William gave new life to the party of disintegration. The leaders of that party who had been imprisoned at Loevestein resumed their former places and employments. They were praised by their supporters as patriots and defenders of liberty, and those who had been discountenanced by the Prince as the authors of the divisions and discord among the provinces were rewarded by being placed into the magistracies and put into other positions of authority or profit.'[2]

Before the aimless and dispirited followers of the princely house had recovered from the overwhelming surprise and sorrow caused by the Prince's death, the politicians of Holland had begun to exploit the favourable opportunity offered to them. Having been freed from the counterpoise of the influence of the Prince of Orange, the province of Holland immediately made the balance of power sway towards her own side. Disregarding the services of the House of Orange-Nassau and its claims to the gratitude of the Netherlands, the province of Holland decided that she would never again have a stadtholder, and determined no longer to be guided by the interests of the generality, but solely by her own interests. Henceforth the union of the Netherlands was, as far as the province of Holland was concerned, a word without meaning. Holland meant to go her own way.[3]

[1] *Archives d'Orange*, série ii. vol. iv. 120.**

[2] *Historical Remarks upon the late Revolutions*, 1675, 17.*

[3] *Archives d'Orange*, série ii. vol. iv. 118.**

'The lords of Holland began to form thoughts in themselves of ruling over the other provinces, it being but reasonable, as they imagined, that as Holland contributed on all occasions as much as all the other provinces together, and was the chief support of the Union, so it ought to be considered above the other members of it, and have a larger power in the management of public affairs than the rest who lived under its protection and defence. These thoughts were soon turned into resolutions, and these resolutions were executed to such a degree that the government was quite altered from what it had been in former times.' [1]

Most great reforms and revolutions have been effected by means of bribery. Henry VIII. of England had no difficulty in creating a great zeal for the reformation of the Church among the nobility when he proposed to divide the Church lands among them.[2] Holland, wishing to abolish the stadtholdership, made over to the individual towns the final and absolute rights of appointing those magistrates who formerly had been selected by the stadtholder, as the representative of the nation, and made certain offices permanent. All these reforms favoured the ruling oligarchs, none the people. Having thus bribed the local dignitaries into acquiescence with her unconstitutional and revolutionary plans, Holland called together a national assembly which was to deliberate on affairs of State. With the help of this assembly Holland meant to satisfy her ambitions.

The national convention sat deliberating slowly and ponderously for eight months, and Holland succeeded in preventing the election of a captain-general. By private manœuvring it dissuaded four of the provinces from electing a stadtholder. By the arrangements made in reference to the army, Holland became the absolute mistress of that part of the national army for which it had to pay and all other provinces were placed in a similar position. The officers of the provincial contingent—for the Netherlands had no longer a national army—were to be appointed by the provinces, and the officers and men were to be sworn to obey the commands of the civil provincial authorities. Each province thus acquired military home rule.[3] 'The authority

[1] *Historical Remarks upon the late Revolutions*, 1675, 25.*

[2] Hallam, *Constitutional History*, chap. ii.

[3] Geddes, *John de Witt* 1879, 154.

of the Prince came to be shared among the several magistrates of the State; the cities assumed the nomination of their several magistrates; the States Provincial, the disposal of all military commands in those troops for which they paid their share; and the States-General, the command of the armies, by officers of their own appointment, substituted and changed at their will. No power remained to pardon what was once condemned by rigour of the law, nor was there any person left to represent the port and dignity of a sovereign State.'[1]

The politicians of the party of disintegration and of disorganisation were jubilant at having at last obtained absolute supremacy in the State. They immediately began to abolish all national control, to tear the national organisation into tatters, to distribute the sovereign power of the commonwealth to all and sundry, and to convert all the high offices of the republic into party spoils to be scrambled for by the politicians, elevating influence coupled with impudence above administrative ability coupled with experience.

Several of the provinces opposed Holland's policy. The representatives of the province of Friesland, for instance, addressed a solemn warning in form of a memoir to the orators and wire-pullers of the national assembly. They implored the deputies not hastily to alter the constitution of the republic in their own favour, and especially not to abolish the central authority, the stadtholdership, because, by doing so, they would cripple the State and bring about its ruin. The memoir of the province of Friesland throws so strong a light upon the alteration of the constitution accomplished by the Dutch politicians, after the death of William II., it is so statesmanlike, so wise and so weighty a document, and it is of so great and so permanent a value to all democracies, that it is worth while giving a considerable portion of it in this place. The States of Friesland said:—

'No one acquainted with politics can be unaware of the fundamental fact that in a State ruled by many, nothing is more dangerous than the divisions between those who govern. These divisions arise from dissensions, mutual jealousies, the spirit of faction, and the diversity of views and of aims which are as

[1] Sir William Temple, *United Provinces*, 1672, chap. ii.**

indissolubly attached to the democratic form of government as the shadow is to the body. That these evils are indissolubly bound to a State which is ruled by many may be seen from the constant discussions and divisions among the Athenians, from the frequent disturbances and changes which occurred in Rome after the expulsion of the kings, and from many other examples which show that the greater is the number of those who rule, the more it is to be feared that discord arises among them. Through the strife of parties, through the collision of divided interests, many republics have been ruined.

'Our forefathers who were taught wisdom by Prince William I. of glorious memory, the greatest statesman and the wisest man of his time, had foreseen the danger of divisions, and, under the advice and with the approval of the Prince, had resolved that the institution and authority of a stadtholder is useful and necessary to modify the evils which are found in every State which is ruled by many. They regarded that office as a means for hindering and preventing dissensions and discord, and saw in it the seal and the chain of that perpetual alliance upon which they had entered. They saw in the stadtholder whom they had chosen, established and confirmed, the healer of the ills natural to republics; they saw in him a sacred anchor, and the only influence able to allay disputes and the evils arising from the dissensions which are inevitable in all democracies. Therefore they determined that in all questions regarding peace, war, armistice and taxation, the decision should be left to the stadtholders, as may be seen from Article 9 of the Union. Similarly, all other disputes which could arise among the provinces were to be submitted for adjustment to the stadtholders for final decision, as may be seen from Article 16 of the Union.[1]

'For the same considerations, it was established by Article 24 that the interpretation of the doubtful passages with regard to the Union should also be given to the stadtholders, and by their oath the stadtholders were bound to respect the Articles of the Confederation, to enforce their being respected and to maintain the army in towns and villages, as may be seen from Articles 25 and 26 of the Union.

'As all the measures, institutions and provisions which

[1] See page 100 f.

concern all the provinces, and consequently the whole State and its preservation, were settled in the form of an agreement between all the members, it necessarily follows that no individual member, or members, of the Union can change anything against the will of one, two, or three provinces. Hence they are compelled to elect a stadtholder.

'There is a principle "Qui ad finem obligatus est, obligatus quoque est ad media," Who agrees to the end agrees also to the means. As the provinces are obliged to preserve the Union and to prevent and appease discords, they are also compelled to make use of the means which are provided for that end, especially as these means have specifically and formally been agreed upon, and have been approved of by the general consent of the confederates. Besides, apart from the great diversity of opinion in all democracies, we have to consider the incredible dilatoriness and delay with which in every many-headed government decisions are taken. Plutarch, speaking of the Samnites, says, "Their deliberations are long and they slowly lead to slow action and sometimes to nothing." This slowness in action and this diversity of opinions are remedied by the vigilance, prestige, authority, and skill of the stadtholder, who brings unanimity and concord into the deliberations of the council, and promptitude into the execution of the steps decided on, so that those measures which have been determined upon are promptly carried out. . . .

'Daily experience shows us that the progress of the provinces suffers through the influence of regrettable prejudices and through the effect of obstruction; that the whole union often suffers through the irresolution of one of its members. It is in the interest of all that deliberations and resolutions should be taken and their execution be effected with the greatest possible expedition. Therefore we insist that the States of all the provinces resolve to elect a stadtholder.

'This is all the more necessary as, to the surprise of the whole world, God has blessed us exceedingly under that form of government which we actually possess, and it is to be feared that, in changing the constitution of the republic, its glory and happiness also may be changed. Tacitus advises not to change that which is good. Thucydides is of the same opinion.

'In the instruction of the Council of State of the year 1588, in Articles 1, 4, 6, 20, 34, and several others, the stadtholders or governors are mentioned as integral parts of the government. Hence it is clear that our ancestors were of opinion that the stadtholders were indispensable to the welfare of the State.

'The argument that the sovereign power of each individual province is diminished by the existence of a stadtholder does in no way affect the strength of our arguments, for the sovereignty of the provinces is in no way violated, restricted, or altered through the existing contracts and treaties. If that were the case, all kings and all states would lose part of their sovereign authority every time that they bound themselves by treaty. As this would be absurd, the same holds good in our case.

'As the liberty of the individual who is restrained by the law from certain actions is neither affected nor diminished by that law, so the majesty of a sovereign and of a sovereign State is neither affected nor diminished if, by a convention or a treaty, it is debarred from some action and obliged to some other action.

'The distinction which is made between the office of the stadtholder and the occupant of that office is more subtle than to the point. It is certain that the High and Mighty Lords, the States, have absolutely willed when the Union and the Constitution were created, that then and in future stadtholders should allay and adjust the differences which might arise from those causes which have been mentioned in the foregoing. These differences should provisionally be adjusted by them until a general agreement should be arrived at by the individual members. It is evident that the Articles 9, 16, 21 and various others speak in general terms and draw no distinction between stadtholders present and to come, and these articles have hitherto been interpreted in this sense by the High and Mighty Lords.

'The rest of the arguments which have been advanced against appointing a stadtholder consist of far-fetched interpretations, confident assertions, the refutation of objections which have been raised to give strength to the case against the stadtholders and various similar arguments. All these far-fetched and laboured arguments fall to the ground for the reasons given in the foregoing.

'The deputies of Friesland believe it to be superfluous to sum

up their views. Hence the Lords Commissioners of Friesland declare in the sincerity of their hearts and with a true zeal for the maintenance of the commonwealth and for the preservation and security of the nation that they have stated all that is needful. They foresee with fear and trembling the effect of any alteration whatsoever in the constitution, because one alteration leads to several others, and these alterations rarely succeed or have beneficial results. Besides, the States have prospered so much under the form of government which has prevailed until now that the United Provinces should remember what has been said of Rome: The Roman republic preserved her greatness by following her time-proved traditions and the example of her greatest men.'[1]

One may convince the understanding but not the will. The impressive warnings of the representatives of Friesland remained unheeded and their opposition was disregarded. The majority of Dutch politicians were determined not to listen to reason and to the voice of patriotism. The politicians of the party of disintegration thought only of their personal and immediate advantage and declined to think of the future of their country.

The States of Friesland had good cause to look with grave anxiety into the future, for the province of Holland had become all-powerful, not only in domestic politics but in matters of foreign policy as well, and the Little Hollander politicians had already gravely compromised the position of the commonwealth by a policy in which the egotism of the merchant was coupled with the superficiality and recklessness of the irresponsible amateur. After the conclusion of peace in 1648, the politicians of Holland caused themselves to be disliked by all foreign Powers and hated by most for their overbearing behaviour.[2] Besides, while William II. was still alive the statesmen of Holland had entered upon a very dangerous intrigue with the revolutionary government of England, acting in the same spirit in which, before the peace of 1648, they had, behind the back of the nation, entered into treasonable negotiations with Spain.[3] On December 7, 1649, Ambassador Brasset reported 'In the States of the province of Holland it was proposed that a commissioner

[1] Aitzema, *Saken van Staet*, 1669, vol. iii. 542 ff.**

[2] Cerisier, *Histoire des Provinces Unies*, vol. vi. 280.* [3] See page 212 ff.

should be sent to England authorised to conclude an alliance with the new English Government, the States of Holland taking this step in their private capacity as a province, without the authority or consent of the other provinces. If that proposal should be adopted, it would mean the absolute ruin and break-up of the Union.' Manœuvres such as these were resisted by the Stadtholder and the other six provinces, and as Holland persisted in her course the States-General requested the Prince to watch over the preservation of the Union.[1] It was clear that the province of Holland was likely to lead the commonwealth into the greatest difficulties and dangers, as soon as the controlling influence of the Stadtholder, the official guardian of the Union, was removed.

At the end of the Great National Convention, Jacob Kats, the Pensioner—that is the prime minister—of the province of Holland had made a speech in which he had said, 'The stadtholder is but the ornament of the magnificent palace of the State, the columns of which are formed by the provinces. One may let the stadtholder disappear, and the edifice will lose nothing essential to it.'[2] Encouraged by the highest dignitary of Holland, the policy of disintegration and disorganisation made rapid progress. 'The arms and colours of the Prince of Orange, which for many years had adorned the cities, were pulled down, broken and defaced by the politicians, who, by every means in their power, strove to lessen the esteem, respect, and affection in which the Dutch people always had held the princes of the House of Orange, who in the time of the greatest danger had been their protectors and defenders.'[3]

Most of the old troops who had proved their valour in the service of the republic were disbanded because it was thought that they would always retain their affection for the princes of the House of Orange, who in the past had led them from victory to victory. 'Each province having her share in the army was able to put into it whomsoever they liked. Hence the younger sons of burgomasters and the relatives and friends of their wives were those who were given the highest military charges. The navy

[1] *Archives d'Orange*, série ii. vol. iv. 43.**

[2] Cerisier, *Histoire des Provinces Unies*, vol. vi. 385.*

[3] *Historical Remarks upon the late Revolutions*, 1675, 18.*

was similarly treated, but as the navy was considered a dangerous profession, Dutchmen of the highest social standing avoided it, preferring the army.'[1]

In every State military and political matters are indissolubly connected. The State is power. The national power and the national sense are visibly embodied in the national army. Therefore he who cripples the national army—a mercenary army controlled by party politicians is hardly a national army, but rather a national toy—cripples not only the power of the State, but also the patriotic sentiment and the spirit of sacrifice among the citizens. He who gives home rule in military matters to the various political units composing a state or empire takes the greatest steps towards the dissolution of that state or empire. For these reasons it is most unfortunate that every British colony has its own defensive forces, that Australia has her own flag, that neither an imperial army nor an imperial navy has been created. Therefore, those British patriots who wish well to the empire and wish to see it consolidated and unified should strive before all to create an imperial army and navy which of course could be reinforced by purely local militias. The existence of an imperial army and navy administered by an imperial war office and admiralty, directed and controlled by an imperial senate and prime minister, and paid for by imperial taxation would soon create in Great Britain and in all her colonies the strongest sense of brotherhood and of imperial solidarity. The British Empire would then be born. At present it is merely a geographical expression and a political fiction.

The Dutch had a national army and deliberately dissolved it.

Far-sighted and patriotic Dutchmen foresaw the danger of tampering with the national army, and of replacing the national defensive force by local armies. They feared that the dissolution and break-up of the national army would be followed by the dissolution and break-up of the political union. Therefore, Aerssen van Sommelsdyk wrote on February 13, 1651, to Prince William Frederick of Nassau, with regard to the policy of disintegration and disorganisation: 'We shall have first confusion and then the State will perish unless the old rules and maxims

[1] Comte de Guiche, *Mémoires*, 1744, vol. i. 41.*

of the Union are reintroduced.'[1] His prophecy and the warning of the province of Friesland that 'in changing the constitution of the republic its glory and happiness might also be changed,'[2] unfortunately came true. The politicians' *coup d'état* of 1650 was the principal cause of the disasters which overtook the Netherlands, and it marks the beginning of their terribly rapid decline.

It was only natural that the Netherlands 'fell first a prey to confusion and then a prey to their enemies,' as Aerssen van Sommelsdyk had prophesied; for no State, and least of all a union of democratic States such as the United Provinces, can exist without a strong central government and an efficient national organisation. A chance agglomeration of individual political units may confederate themselves and assume the outward appearance of a State, but such a chance agglomeration is not a State in reality and cannot last. It compares for all practical purposes as badly with the well-organised and homogeneous States by which it is surrounded, and against which, earlier or later, it will be pitted, as a chance collection of oarsmen, each of whom is determined to row a course of his own in his own style, compares with a carefully selected, trained, and disciplined crew.

The numerous loose confederations of independent States, and especially of republics, of which we have knowledge, have proved short-lived. The bond of sentiment of such confederations, which is exalted by poets and by those enthusiastic political sentimentalists whose imagination is more strongly developed than is their knowledge of historical fact and of political practice, has proved singularly weak when tested by the struggle for existence. Such loose confederations have either dissolved themselves by peaceful separation of their members, as Sweden and Norway have recently done, or they have fought among themselves for supremacy in the confederation with the object of enforcing their will upon the rest. The wars among the confederated States of ancient Greece, the war between the Northern and Southern States of North America, the war of the Swiss Sonderbund, and the numerous wars between the members of the old German Empire up to the war between Prussia and Austria of 1866 are a few of the many cases in point which

[1] *Archives d'Orange*, série ii. vol. v. 11.**

[2] See page 236.

illustrate the natural weakness and inherent danger of federations of independent States which are held together merely by the bond of sentiment and a treaty of alliance but which do not possess a national or imperial prime minister, senate, foreign office, treasury, army, navy, &c.

If a number of independent or quasi-independent States confederate themselves and form a union, but retain all rights of taxation and the control of their armed forces in their own hands, lengthy discussions are required before common action can be undertaken, and differences of opinion with regard to political matters between the members of the confederation are bound to arise. If these differences can be adjusted all may be well, although the psychological moment for action will often be missed while the 'united' governments are discussing; but if they cannot be adjusted the union will either be suddenly broken up or it will gradually dissolve through the permanence of conflict, of friction and division and through the consequent lassitude and indifference of the confederates. Therefore a loose union of States is apt to come to an end either by war between its component parts or by the withdrawal of some of its members.

The unavoidable differences among the members of a union of independent States or of an unorganised empire such as is the British Empire—which, rightly considered, is for all practical purposes only a confederation of independent States which are not even held together by a treaty of alliance—can be adjusted only if there exists a trusted, respected, and powerful imperial authority which can serve as a friendly referee, as a high court of justice, and as a court of appeal to all the members, which can act in time of need without lengthy consultations with the members of the empire, and which can dispose of all the armed forces of the empire and certain imperial financial resources sufficient to pay for the imperial administration and defence. An empire which has to beg the individual States for the funds required to run the imperial business, an empire which, like a charity, depends for its existence on voluntary contributions, is an absurdity and cannot last.

The members of the British Empire are equals, and the experience of everyday life teaches us that the mere existence of an acknowledged supreme authority reduces the quarrels between

equals to a minimum. Every meeting wants a chairman to lead and to regulate proceedings between equals; every parliament requires a Speaker or President with ample powers to keep the assembly in order, which is all the more necessary and all the more difficult because all have equal rights to be heard; every union of independent or quasi-independent States requires a strong central authority able to lead and to direct the members. Otherwise a private meeting, a meeting of parliament or a union of States, becomes an endless palaver and a disorderly mob. If none can command none will obey.

Besides, in every State moments occur when secrecy in deliberation, celerity in decision, and rapidity of action are required. There is no time to discuss, to vote, and to ask for papers to be laid when an enemy threatens the State either by his unavowed, and therefore all the more dangerous, diplomatic measures, or openly by his army, nor is there time to make arrangements for common defence. In diplomatic and military affairs immediate action is often necessary. Therefore in a union of States, the power to act on behalf of all the members in matters of foreign policy, both diplomatically and by war, must be delegated to a central authority. The power may, of course, be exercised by a large representative assembly, but as a large assembly can act neither with secrecy nor with despatch, a small discreet central council of ambassadors, such as the American Senate, or the German Bundesrath (federal council), or the Swiss Nationalrath (national council), presided over by an acknowledged head of the union, must be empowered to direct the whole commonwealth in foreign affairs, for 'absolute power must reside somewhere in all governments.'[1]

Common sense and historical experience show the necessity of such an organisation. States are not sentimental associations but business associations, organised on the partnership principle. If the sentimental tie does not suffice between partners in business, or between partners in marriage, it will certainly not suffice between partner States.

When Germany and the United States were loose confederations of independent States, held together by a bond of sentiment, they were weak and poor, and disorder reigned in them.

[1] Blackstone, *Laws of England*, vol. i. 160.

From the very creation of the United States there were two parties, a Federalist and an anti-Federalist party. The Federalists wanted to make the United States a State with a national government; the anti-Federalists wanted the United States to be a league of independent republics. As long as the United States formed only a loose confederation of independent States, the individual States of the North American Union constantly plotted and schemed against one another, threatened secession when opposed, and endangered the internal peace and the integrity of the North American Republic, which was permanently in danger of falling to pieces either peacefully or in civil war. Therefore Daniel Webster exclaimed on January 26, 1830, in Congress, 'When my eyes shall be turned for the last time to behold the sun in heaven, may I not see him shining on the broken fragments of a once glorious union, on States dissevered, discordant, belligerent, on a land rent with civil feuds or drenched, it may be, in fraternal blood.'

Exactly thirty years after these words were spoken matters came to a crisis. The Southern States seceded, and as the party of national union could not allow the American Union to dissolve peacefully, the Civil War began which was to decide whether the United States would form a nation, or whether the individual units would drift apart and form a number of independent States. Up to the time of the Civil War the United States were disunited and weak for action. They became a State when these intrigues had brought about the outbreak of the Civil War. Now only we can speak of the United States as a State and a nation; State rights and national rights no longer clash but are reconciled; the unity and power of the United States are definitely established and organised.

Before the German Empire was founded, there existed a German Confederation, which was practically a debating society, without a programme, without authority and without a head. The German Confederation possessed no national government, no national army, no national treasury, and it was the laughing-stock of Europe. The intrigues and counter-intrigues between the States of the German Confederation led at last to the fratricidal war between Austria and Prussia in 1866, and to the establishment of a homogeneous German Empire. In domestic affairs the

individual German States, like the individual North American States, enjoy full liberty of action. In foreign affairs, diplomacy, war, and imperial defence, they are directed by the imperial authorities, which dispose of resources sufficient to carry on the administration of the empire. Thus the United States and Germany have become powerful, truly united, and properly organised centralised States. Switzerland, which up to 1798 was only a league of independent States without a central government, and many other confederated States, have gone through a similar ordeal which has overtaken most loose confederations. No longer are the political units composing the United States, Germany and Switzerland divided among themselves and plotting against each other, and no longer can an enemy weaken the American Union, the German Union, or the Swiss Union by intriguing with some of its members, as formerly was habitually done. Compared with other nations, the United States, Germany, and Switzerland are nations indeed, while the British Empire, possessing no imperial army, no imperial navy, no imperial treasury, no imperial council, and no imperial organisation, is as yet an unorganised chance agglomeration of dangerous weakness. The organisation of the British Empire is the great problem of the future.

Considerations of the requirements of the nation and of the dangers of the future did not weigh with the Dutch oligarchs, who lived in the present, and whose chief aim was to make money, to enjoy themselves, and to increase their political influence. According to their views and to the views of their spokesmen, the seven provinces were not one body except in the matter of the war which they had carried on against Spain. Their national assembly, the States-General, had not the right to enforce its will upon any of the individual provinces such as Holland, as each province was an independent sovereign power. The States-General was merely an assembly of plenipotentiaries. The States Provincial existed of themselves, and knew no one above themselves, and the stadtholder, if they chose to elect one, was their servant.[1]

The constitutional foundation of the United Netherlands was

[1] Holland's *Praatje tusschen vier Persoonen.* The Duncaniana Pamphlets for 1650.

the Union which had been concluded at Utrecht in the year 1579, of which details have been given,[1] and this Union was renewed after the death of Prince William II., on August 21, 1651, in The Hague; but that renewal was merely an empty formality, as the *coup d'état* of the politicians had destroyed the ancient constitution of the country by destroying the only connecting link between the provinces, the stadtholderate.

The ancient arms of the Netherlands were a lion holding in his right paw a sword, and in his left paw seven spears, bound together by an orange band, with the motto, taken from Sallust, 'Concordia res parvæ crescunt; Discordia maximæ dilabuntur.'[2] Through unity small States grow great; discord destroys the greatest. The politicians having torn to pieces the orange band, the seven spears of the Dutch lion were to fall to the ground the Netherlands were to decline and to decay.

[1] See pages 99–102.

[2] Valckenier, *Das Verwirrte Europa*, 1677, vol. i. 57.**

CHAPTER XIII

ENGLAND, STRIVING AFTER COMMERCIAL AND MARITIME SUPREMACY, BECOMES ENVIOUS OF THE PROSPERITY OF THE DUTCH AND HOSTILE TO THEM

'Increase of power gives rise to increase of malice and envy, and these to wars and losses.'—MACHIAVELLI, *La Mente di un Uomo di Stato*, ii. 5.

'Commercial nations can exist for a long time in a position of mediocrity, but if they become great, their greatness does not last. They rise slowly, and hardly noticeably, to eminence, and their actions do not attract the attention of the world, but as soon as other States become aware of the great prosperity of a commercial nation, they hasten to deprive it of its prosperity which it has gained, one might almost say, by stealth.'—MONTESQUIEU, *Grandeur et Décadence des Romains*, chap. iv.

AFTER the *coup d'état* of 1650, which made the politicians omnipotent in the Netherlands, and which gave to the individual provinces almost complete autonomy, the seven Dutch republics, and the Dutch politicians, continued intriguing and struggling for power among themselves with redoubled energy, and so absorbed were they in the fight for the spoils of office that they quite neglected foreign politics. Being principally occupied with the party game, the Dutch politicians had almost forgotten the existence of foreign nations.

It was perhaps not unnatural that about 1650 the Dutch politicians paid but little attention to foreign affairs. The Netherlands had become one of the leading great Powers; they held the balance of power in Europe, and they were considered the arbiters of Europe. They were the richest nation in the world, and many believed that they were also the strongest nation, wealth being considered equal to power. The position of the United Provinces was apparently quite secure, and the political sky perfectly serene, when, to the great surprise of the Dutch

politicians the relations between the Dutch Commonwealth and the young English Commonwealth became exceedingly strained.

In the eyes of the Netherlands' politicians, England was the natural friend and ally of the Dutch Commonwealth. England and the Netherlands were bound to each other by many ties. They were the leading Protestant countries in Europe; they had fought shoulder to shoulder in the defence of their national liberty against the mighty empire of Spain; the majority of European States were Roman Catholic, and as the Roman Catholic Powers had shown an unrelenting hostility to Protestantism, the Protestant States were compelled to stand together in self-defence. Charles I. had been executed, and a republic had been established in England in 1649, and the Stadtholderate had been abolished in the Netherlands in 1650 by a *coup d'état*. England and the Netherlands were republics ruled by revolutionary governments, both had reason to fear the hostility of the monarchs of Europe, and they were therefore compelled to help one another in time of need. Thus the Netherlands and England were bound to one another by common interests, common dangers, a common history, a similar development, similar institutions, and a similar political position. The instinct of self-preservation should therefore have engendered a sense of solidarity in the English and Dutch governments and peoples. A war between the English and Dutch commonwealths seemed, at least from the Dutch point of view, to be the most improbable of all political contingencies.

Politics and trade are things apart; and history teaches us that wars arise perhaps more from economic motives than from political ones, as has been shown in Chapter IV. Therefore, although England had every reason to support the Netherlands politically, it was quite conceivable that she might desire to cripple them economically, in order to capture their trade and their wealth. Indeed, the differences between England and the Netherlands, which eventually brought on a war disastrous to the latter, arose chiefly through commercial jealousy on the part of England, as the following account will clearly show.

At a time when the Netherlands already possessed flourishing industries and an extensive commerce, England was almost exclusively an agricultural country. Until comparatively recent

times Great Britain had practically no fishing industry, no carrying trade, no foreign commerce, no colonies. Italians, Netherlanders, and Germans used to carry on the trade between England and foreign countries. England was industrially a barbarian among the nations, her maritime interests were small, and piracy was, perhaps, her most important maritime industry.

The prosperity of the neighbouring Netherlands awakened a desire of emulation in England, which became all the more keen when refugees from the Netherlands had founded flourishing industries in England, and had introduced into the country a taste for commercial pursuits. England strenuously endeavoured to become an industrial and commercial nation, but, notwithstanding her exertions, she did not succeed in effectively competing with the Dutch. The Netherlands remained immeasurably superior to England in commerce and wealth.

The keen sense of inferiority caused much bitterness in England. The English became envious of the prosperity of the Dutch. English statesmen, merchants, and writers constantly commented on the vast wealth of the Dutch, and devised plans for transferring that wealth from the Netherlands to the shores of England.

The vast fishing trade of the Netherlands was the first and the greatest object of England's envy, especially as the Dutch caught their fish off the British coasts in the view of British citizens, who, for various reasons, were unable to compete with them. Sir John Keymer, a prominent writer on economic matters, wrote in 1601 :—

'There is more wealth raised out of herrings and other fish in his Majesty's seas by the neighbouring nations in one year than the King of Spain hath from the Indies in four.

'There are 20,000 ships and other vessels and about 400,000 people thus set on work by sea and land and maintained only by fishing upon the coast of England, Scotland, and Ireland.

'Being desirous to look into the world, to get knowledge for my country's good, I travelled France, Germany, and divers other places and free States. I found in Lübeck several hundred great ships, in Hamburg about 600. Embden, lately a fishing town within the memory of man not known to have sixty ships, hath 1,400, almost as many as belong to all England; Holland,

not so big as one of your Majesty's shires, eighteen miles long and five broad, hath belonging to it thirty walled towns, 400 villages, and 20,000 sail of ships and hoys, which is more than England, France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Scotland, Denmark, Poland, Sweden, and Russia have all put together, and they build every year 1,000 new ships, having in their soil neither matter to build them nor merchandise to set them forth. Standing in admiration how this might be, I traced the countries twice over from town to town, and from thence along his Majesty's sea coasts of England, Scotland, and Ireland, where I found not only an Indian fleet of forty or fifty sail with 5,000 or 6,000 people yearly employed in this your shipping, one of the greatest sea businesses of the world, but at the least 20,000 sail and above 400,000 persons of all nations, sitting on work in his Majesty's seas about taking these innumerable riches of herrings and other fish which offer themselves to his Majesty's kingdoms above all nations.

'Beside the number taken by their 2,000 "busses," the Hollanders have upon 400 other vessels, called gaynes and evers, which do take herrings at Yarmouth and there sell them and carry away ready money; they have yet 500 other ships, usually trading every year to London, with cod and ling taken in his Majesty's seas, as also other parts of England, and here sell them and carry away most fine gold, which is made into base gold beyond seas, a great hurt to the wealth and strength of our land and hindrance to navigation and mariners and employment to the poor of this nation.'

The Dutch not only caught their fish on the British coasts, but they also hindered Great Britain from trading in fish, for Sir John Keymer informs us:—

'The Hollanders have made a law in their own country that we shall sell no white herrings nor other fish there upon penalty of confiscation, because they will have no other nation serve their country with fish but what they take themselves. They do this for the increase and maintenance of navigation and for setting their people on work. . . . Thus they take herrings in his Majesty's seas and make laws to cross and hinder us in our own sales for the enrichment and the strengthening of themselves and the increasing of their ships and mariners.'

The fishing trade was considered to be the main cause of the wealth of the Netherlands, for Keymer says:

'The return of merchandise, wares and coin for herring and other fish out of other countries is so great that it maketh the bank for coin and staple for all kind of merchandise in Holland. . . . The State of Holland receive more duties and customs for lasts of herrings, fish and other profits, inwards and outwards, in one year than all the customs of England come into in two years. . . . It is most evidently true that his Majesty's seas are far richer than the King of Spain's Indies. . . .

'There were in Holland 126,000 mariners twenty years past, since which time their shipping and mariners are mightily increased, every town is grown as great again as they were before the wars, and beautified with an infinite number of sumptuous buildings enriched with all kinds of merchandises and coin; and where they had but one haven in a town before the wars, they have now two or three, and yet not able to hold their ships if they were all at home at one time; and they employ daily much of their studies to open the gap of traffic and to make fullness of trade, because it maketh a rich Commonwealth, and they spare for no cost, nor deny any privileges that may advance trade and defend them from their enemies, whereby they prevail greatly.'[1]

After having given full details of the vast prosperity which the Netherlands had gained at the cost of England by taking the fish out of the English seas, which by rights ought to enrich the English people, Sir John Keymer concludes with the lament:

'Thus are we eaten out of trade, and the bread taken out of our mouths in our own seas, and the great custom carried from his Majesty's commerce to foreign princes and States. All these nations do beat upon his Majesty's coasts for fish with great ships, take and carry away incomputable riches; when our little boats, crayets, and cobbles dare not look out at sea but in fair weather.'

At the beginning of the seventeenth century the Dutch merchant ships were evidently far superior to the English ships

[1] John Keymer, *Observations made upon the Dutch Fishing*, 1601.*

for we read in a lengthy and very weighty essay of Sir Walter Raleigh which he presented to the King in 1603 :—

'Though an English ship of 200 tons and a Holland ship or any other of the petty States of the same burden be at Dantzic or any other place beyond the sea, or in England, they do serve the merchant better—cheaper by £100 in his freight than we can, by reason he hath but nine or ten mariners and we near thirty ; thus he saveth men's meat and wages in a voyage ; and so in all other their ships according to their burdens, by which means they are freighted wheresoever they go, to great profit, whilst our ships lie still and decay or go to Newcastle for coal.' [1]

Sir Walter Raleigh also complained of the successful activity of the Dutch Government in fostering the trade of the Netherlands and damaging that of England, for he wrote :—

'Notwithstanding the Excises bring them in great revenues, yet whosoever will adventure to Bordeaux but for six tons of wine shall be free of excise in his own house all the year long ; and this is done on purpose to animate and increase merchants in their country. . . . By means of free customs inwards and outwards for any new-erected trade they have gotten already almost the sole trade into their hands.' [2]

Although the Netherlands were ostensibly the most determined champions of freedom of trade—they fought for freedom of trade whenever it suited their purposes—they strove to exclude by every means in their power foreign nations from the trade in which Dutchmen had engaged. Sir Walter Raleigh informs us :—

'If it happen that a trade be stopped by any foreign nation which they heretofore shall do or hear, or any good trading which they never do, they will hinder others and seek, either by favour, money, or force, to open the gap of traffic for advancement of trade amongst themselves and employment of their people.' [3]

The Dutch consistently strove to impede the economic progress of foreign nations. When, for instance, subjects of the republic, who had an expert knowledge of commerce and navigation in the Indies, had taken service with the English about

[1] Sir Walter Raleigh, *Observations touching Trade and Commerce with the Hollander*, 1603.**

[2] *Ibid.*** [3] *Ibid.***

1610, in order to open for them a trade on the coast of Coromandel, the States-General published an ordinance, by which they decreed that those subjects of the republic who took service with foreign nations should have their property confiscated and be banished from the country.[1]

The consequence of the wise and energetic economic policy of the Dutch Government and of the planlessness and lack of method in promoting trade on the part of the English Government, had brought almost the whole of the Anglo-Dutch trade into the hands of the Netherlands, for Sir Walter Raleigh tells us: 'They have a continual trade into this kingdom with 500 or 600 ships yearly, with merchandise of other countries and kingdoms, and store them up in storehouses here until the prices rise to their minds, and we trade not with fifty ships into their country in a year.'[2]

In his memoir on the prosperity of the Netherlands, which is a model of thorough and lucid investigation, Raleigh enumerates some of the causes of the wealth of the Netherlands and of England's poverty. He complains with bitterness that 'The mightiest huge fishing that ever could be heard of in the world is upon the coasts of England, Scotland, and Ireland, but the great fishery is in the Low Countries and other petty States, wherewith they serve themselves and all Christendom.' He tells us that the Netherlands were the storehouse of the world, and that the Dutch almost monopolised the world's trade by trafficking in the productions of other countries, and especially with those of England, and he insinuates that England might easily capture the trade of the Dutch if she be so minded, for he writes:

'The abundance of corn groweth in the East kingdoms, but the great storehouses for grain to serve Christendom and the heathen countries in the time of dearth is in the Low Countries, wherewith upon every occasion of scarcity and dearth they do enrich themselves seven years afterwards, employ their people, and get great freights for their ships in other countries, and we not one in that course. . . . The wool, cloth, lead, tin, and divers other commodities are in England, but by means of our wool

[1] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 175.*

[2] Sir Walter Raleigh, *Observations touching Trade and Commerce with the Hollander*, 1603.**

and cloth going out rough, undressed and undyed, there is an exceeding manufactory and drapery in the Low Countries, wherewith they serve themselves and other nations, and advance greatly the employment of their people at home and traffic abroad, and put down ours in foreign parts where our merchants trade into with our own commodities.

'We send into the East kingdoms yearly but one hundred ships, and our trade chiefly dependeth upon three towns, Elbing, Königsberg, and Dantzic, for making our sales and buying their commodities sent into this realm at dear rates, which this kingdom bears the burden of. The Low Countries send into the East kingdoms yearly about 3,000 ships, trading into every city and port town, taking the advantage and vending their commodities to exceeding profit, and buying and lading their ships with plenty of these commodities, which they have from every one of those towns 20 per cent. cheaper than we, by reason of the difference of the coin, and their fish yields ready money which greatly advances their traffic and decayeth ours. . . .

'No sooner a dearth of fish, wine, or corn here, and other merchandise, but forthwith the Embdeners, Hamburgers, and Hollanders out of their storehouses lade fifty or one hundred ships or more, dispersing themselves round about this kingdom, and carry away great store of coin and wealth, for little commodity in those times of dearth, by which means they suck our commonwealth of her riches, cut down our merchants, and decay our navigation, not with their natural commodities which grow in their own countries, but the merchandises of other countries and kingdoms. . . .

'A dearth of only one year in any other part of Europe enriches Holland for seven years. In the course of a year and a half, during a scarcity in England, there were carried away from the ports of Southampton, Bristol, and Exeter alone nearly £200,000; and if London and the rest of England be included, above £2,000,000 must have been carried away.'[1]

In the eyes of Raleigh, and of Sir John Keymer, the Netherlands enriched themselves by draining England of her wealth.

Sir Walter Raleigh showed that the manufacturing prosperity

[1] Sir Walter Raleigh, *Observations Touching Trade*, &c. 1603.

of the Dutch was dependent on the export of British raw materials and half-manufactured cloth into the Netherlands, and he proved that the wealth of the Dutch industries sprang not so much from the superior ability of the Dutch, as from the ignorance of the English people, the lack of organisation among the merchants and manufacturers, and the indifference of the English Government, which by well-devised fiscal measures could cause English raw material to be converted into manufactured articles by English workers, to be sold abroad by English merchants. Therefore, he submitted the following weighty proposals to King James I.:—

'It is apparent that no three kingdoms in Christendom can compare with your Majesty for support of traffic and continual employment of your people, your Majesty having so many great means, both by sea and land, to enrich your coffers, multiply your navy, enlarge your traffic, make your kingdom powerful and your people rich. . . . To turn the stream of riches raised by your Majesty's native commodities into the natural channel, from which it hath been a long time diverted, may it please your Majesty to consider these points following:—

'1st. Whether it be not fit that a direct trade by English merchants in English commodities be settled within your dominions, which may both dispose more profitably of the riches thereof, and encounter the policy of merchant strangers, who now go beyond us in all kinds of profitable merchandises?

'2nd. Whether it be not necessary that your native commodities should receive their full manufactory by your subjects within your dominions?

'3rd. Whether it be not fit that coals should yield your Majesty and subjects a better value, by permitting them to pass out of the land, and that they be in your subjects' shipping only transported? [This interesting recommendation foreshadows the Navigation Act of 1651.]

'4th. Whether it be not fit your Majesty presently raise your coin to as high a rate as it is in the parts beyond the seas?

'5th. Whether it be not necessary that the great sea business of fishing be forthwith set forward?'

Raleigh assures the King that if this programme be carried out, 'Your Majesty's customs will be exceedingly increased, your

ships and merchants trebled, your lands and waste towns (which are now run out of gates) better replenished, and your people employed to the great enriching and honour of your kingdom.'

Raleigh concludes his essay, which had a very great influence upon the policy of England, with the following spirited appeal, the arguments in which apply as strongly to the British Empire of to-day as they applied to Great Britain three hundred years ago.

Raleigh says: 'God hath endued this kingdom above any three kingdoms in Christendom with divers varieties of home-bred commodities, which others have not, and cannot want, and endowed us with sundry other means to continue and maintain trade, merchandising, and fishing beyond them all, whereby we might prevent the deceivers, engross the commodities of the engrossers, enrich ourselves, and increase our navigation, shipping, and mariners, so as it would make all nations to veil the bonnet to England, if we would not be still wanting to ourselves in employment of our people.'

The arguments which at the dawn of the seventeenth century Sir John Keymer and Sir Walter Raleigh had advanced, for diverting the flow of wealth from the Netherlands to England were constantly used by the leading Englishmen of subsequent times. The great Lord Bacon, for instance, wrote to the Marquis of Buckingham in 1618, 'Scotland is not the leech, as some discoursers say, but the Netherlands. They suck the realm of treasure.' Bacon also urged that the English manufactures should be fostered by the State, and that the importation of those foreign-manufactured articles which could be produced in England should be discouraged by the Government in order 'to set the people on work.' He wrote, for instance, in his 'Advice to Sir George Villiers':—

'This realm is much enriched of late years by the trade of merchandise which the English drive in foreign parts; and if it be wisely managed, it must of necessity very much increase the wealth thereof, care being taken that the exportation exceed in value the importation. . . . Instead of crying up all things which are either brought from beyond sea or wrought here by the hands of strangers, let us advance the native commodities of our kingdom, and employ our countrymen before strangers. Let us turn the wools of the land into cloths and stuffs of our own

growth, and the hemp and flax growing here into linen-cloth and cordage; it would set many thousand hands at work, and thereby one shilling's worth of the materials would by industry be multiplied to five, ten, and many times to twenty times the value.'

The great maritime industry of England is not a plant of natural growth, as many believe, but it is an artificial creation of the early English governments, a hothouse industry, as Adam Smith would have said. Queen Elizabeth had begun the practice of giving bounties to the builders of such ships as carried 100 tons. James I. gave large amounts for the encouragement of shipbuilding; and Charles I. gave from a very scanty revenue a bounty of five shillings a ton for every vessel of 200 tons burden.[1] The fostering policy of the English government had had an excellent effect. Sir William Monson states that the shipping of the port of London had so augmented during the first fifteen years of the reign of Charles I., that it was now able to supply a hundred sail of stout vessels, capable of being converted into men-of-war; while ten large ships had during that period been added to the effective force of the Royal Navy.[2]

Although the merchant marine and the navy of England had considerably increased during the first half of the seventeenth century, England remained in commerce, industry, and wealth greatly inferior to the Netherlands. Lewes Roberts, a well-known merchant and writer on commercial affairs, complained in 1641: 'There is no timber in Holland, and yet the Dutch have the staple thereof; no corn grows there, yet they have the staple thereof; there are no vineyards nor salt in Holland, yet they have the staple thereof; no wools there, and yet they have the staple of manufactures; the main shoals and massy bulk of herrings, from whence their industry and traffic raises to them so many millions yearly, proceed out of our English seas, but yet the great fisheries, to the shame and wonderful dishonour of England, are in the Low Countries, wherewith not only their occasions at home are plentifully supplied, but all Christendom besides abundantly stored, it being

[1] A. Chalmers, *An Historical Review of the Domestic Economy of Great Britain*, 1812, 42.

[2] W. S. Lindsay, *Merchant Shipping*, 1874, vol. ii. 173.

computed that they send forth yearly unto other countries about 100,000 last, which we may account to be 200,000 tons.'[1]

The foregoing extracts clearly show that the leading English statesmen and thinkers strove to bring the trade of the Dutch, and especially their most important industry, the fishing industry, into English hands. With this object in view, fishery and trading companies and various industrial establishments were created, subsidised, and encouraged by the government and wealthy noblemen of England, but these had on the whole but little success in competing with the all-powerful and exceedingly well organised and directed Dutch industries.

As competition with the Dutch in fishing had proved a failure, the English Government resolved to deprive the Dutch of their fishing industry by claiming the ownership over the seas surrounding Great Britain, and by taxing the Dutch fishing industry out of existence.

There were many precedents for a claim to the dominion of the sea. Spain had asserted dominion over the Pacific Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico in the sixteenth century, and Charles V., not satisfied with possessing a territorial empire on which the sun never set, had styled himself the King of the Ocean. Portugal had declared the Indian Ocean and all the Atlantic, south of Morocco, to belong to her; and Spain and Portugal had pushed the exercise of their so-called proprietary rights to the extent of prohibiting all other nations from navigating or entering the waters over which they asserted dominion.[2] Paolo Sarpi, the celebrated historian of the Council of Trent, had claimed for and on behalf of the Republic of Venice the sovereignty over the Adriatic which Venice had exercised from time immemorial,[3] Genoa claimed the sovereignty over the Ligurian Sea, and France claimed the dominion over some not very well defined parts of the waters round her coast.[4]

The claim to the possession of a large part of the sea, which, by its nature, is open to all, is of course absurd, but, since laws and decrees derive their binding force not from their inherent

[1] Lewes Roberts, *Treasure of Traffike*, 1641.
[2] Hall, *International Law*, part ii. chap. ii.
[3] Wheaton, *International Law*, part ii. chap. xiv.
[4] Hall, *International Law*, part ii. chap. ii.

reasonableness and justice, but from the existence of a compelling power behind them which is sufficiently strong to enforce obedience, the dominion of the sea could of course be claimed by any Power if the strength of its fleets was sufficiently great to overawe all those who were inclined to dispute that claim. The great commercial States wished to reserve to themselves the most valuable part of their maritime trade, and they invented the doctrine of the right to the dominion of the sea, wishing to suit their legal theories to their political intentions. Modern States act in the same way. The Monroe doctrine is a case in point.

Legal theories such as the right to the dominion of the sea are invented because States would expose themselves to the reproach of acting tyrannously in making unjust decrees, and relying solely on the right of the stronger for their binding power. Therefore every government appoints lawyers, whose special duty it is to invent legal theories and claims which support the actions of their principals, their governments. The government lawyers of every country, who stand at the head of their profession, are considered as unimpeachable authorities on international law by their uninitiated fellow-citizens, but they stand in reality in the same relation to the government which they serve in which ordinary lawyers stand to their clients. Their business is not to expound the law in the abstract, but to defend the interests of their clients, and to win their case. Lawyers must not be too scrupulous.

The claim to the dominion of the sea on the part of foreign countries had never been admitted by England. When Mendoza, the Spanish ambassador, complained to Queen Elizabeth of the depredations of Drake in the South Seas, and of his sailing in the Indian Ocean, the Queen answered that the Spaniards had prohibited foreign commerce in those seas over which they claimed dominion, 'contrary to the law of nations,' and that she could not persuade herself that they possessed any just title to the dominion of the sea[1]; neither nature nor regard of public use permitted its exclusive possession, and that therefore the ocean was free to all; that it was as lawful for her subjects to sail on the Indian seas as it was for the Spaniards, since the sea and air

[1] Ward, *History of the Law of Nations*, vol. ii. 471.

were common to all men.[1] In 1602, Queen Elizabeth had sent a special embassy to Denmark, and in the instructions given to the ambassadors it was said, 'And you shall further declare that the law of nations alloweth of fishing in the sea everywhere, as also of using ports and coasts of princes in amity for traffic, and it is manifest that by denying of this fishing and much more for spoiling our subjects for this respect we have been injured against the law of nations.'

From the foregoing arguments, it is clear that England used to champion freedom of the seas in the name of international law with the object of wresting their trade and fishing from those nations which claimed the dominion of the sea. When, in 1609, James I. prohibited the Dutch from fishing in the English seas a different legal theory had to be invented in order to give to his actions the appearance of justice, and his lawyers hastened to prove to the world that the King's action was sanctioned by international law.

The law of nations is one of the most useful implements of the statesman, for it can be made to answer all purposes. It is expounded by every nation in the manner most suitable to its particular political requirements and ambitions. In fact, it may be said that there is no international law, for it is a law which a strong nation is apt to take into its own hands, and which is devoid of compelling power—except in the hands of the strongest. Owing to the fact that that which is called international law is expounded by every nation according to its will and momentary convenience, every nation has its own international law, and creates its own precedents. Hence, questions such as the claim to the dominion of the sea are still unsettled, and as the problem of the dominion of the sea may again be brought forward—some time ago Germany seemed desirous of claiming the dominion over the Baltic for herself and the northern Powers—the controversy regarding the dominion of the sea which took place between the Dutch and the English in the seventeenth century is of considerable practical interest even at the present day.

The pretensions of the Portuguese to the exclusive navigation of the African and the Indian seas were founded on their discovery of the Cape of Good Hope and on the division of the New World

[1] A. Anderson, *History of Commerce*, 1764, vol. i. 434.

between Spain and Portugal by the Pope. Wishing to attack the trading monopoly of the Portuguese, Grotius published, in 1609, his 'Mare Liberum,' in which he demonstrated the hollowness of all claims to the dominion of the sea. The 'Mare Liberum' was dedicated 'to the princes and free peoples of the Christian world.' All nations were enjoined to assist the Dutch in defending international free trade and free navigation for the special benefit of the Dutch. The appeal of the all-powerful Dutch merchants to the civilised world to defend freedom of trade was as ineffective as was a similar appeal to the world made in the forties by the then all-powerful English manufacturers. Both appeals provoked a broad smile in all other nations. The championship of free trade by England in the forties and by the Netherlands in the seventeenth century was, like every policy, dictated by political convenience, national selfishness and commercial greed. The high-flown phrases and lofty sentiments used by the originators of both these policies could deceive only the simple.

The Dutch championship of freedom of navigation in the name of liberty and civilisation was as insincere as was the English opposition to freedom of navigation in the English seas made in the name of international law. The problem at issue between England and the Netherlands was not the academic question of the dominion of the sea. 'The question between the two countries was simply whether the Dutch should be allowed to pursue in peace their most prosperous herring fishery on the British coast. Holland, being then all-powerful upon the sea, and being practically without a competitor, had nothing to fear from foreign competition, and was therefore as much in favour of free trade on the seas as Great Britain was in favour of free trade in manufactured goods when she had practically the monopoly in manufacturing.'[1] These were the motives which made the Dutch enthusiastic supporters of freedom of navigation and of trade.

In the very same year in which Grotius pleaded that all princes and free people of Christendom should unite and support the Netherlands in their championship of freedom of trade and of navigation, James I. published a proclamation in which he said, 'We have resolved first to give notice to all the world that

[1] Laspeyres, *Volkswirtschaftliche Anschauungen*, 1863, 159.*

our express pleasure is that from the beginning of the month of August coming no person, of what nation or quality soever, yea, not our natural-born subjects, be permitted to fish upon any of our coasts and seas of Great Britain, Ireland, and the rest of the islands adjacent, where most usually heretofore any fishing has been, until they have orderly demanded and obtained licences from us, or such of our commissioners as we have authorised in that behalf, which licences our intention is shall be yearly demanded for so many vessels and ships, and the tonnage thereof, as shall intend to fish for that whole year or any part thereof, upon our coasts and seas as aforesaid, upon pain of such chastisement as shall be fit to be inflicted, upon such wilful offenders.'[1]

The proclamation of 1609, by which ostensibly all nations were prohibited from fishing off the coasts of Great Britain, was in reality directed only against the Dutch,[2] and the claim to the sovereignty over the British seas was promptly vindicated by Albericus Gentilis, Professor of Law at Oxford, in his 'Advocatio Hispanica,'[3] for it is the duty of the legal authorities to prove the legality of government acts.

As the 'Mare Liberum' of Grotius, which vindicated the freedom of the sea, required refutation on the part of England, William Wellwood published, probably by King James's direction, a small treatise entitled 'De Dominio Maris,' in which he endeavoured to prove that the sea is capable of being privately possessed, and he declared that England possessed the dominion of the sea over a zone extending one hundred miles from the shore. Wellwood's tract is a very poor exposition of international law, and he reveals with childlike simplicity the practical object of his treatise by declaring that 'a nation which had become rich and haughty with the spoils of all peoples had claimed that the sea was free to all,' and by lamenting that 'the British are robbed in their own seas by foreign fishers who, like an inundation, have overwhelmed their shores.'[4]

In 1609 James I. seized a number of Dutch fishing-boats and succeeded in extorting a ransom from the Dutch, but he quietly

[1] Malynes, *Lex Mercatoria*, 1622, 136.
[2] Hall, *International Law*, part ii. chap. ii.
[3] Wheaton, *International Law*, part ii. chap. iv.
[4] Anderson, *History of Commerce*, 1764, vol. i. 488.

dropped his claims to the ownership of the English seas when the Netherlands had their fishing fleet accompanied by warships, for at that time the Dutch were the strongest nation at sea.

The Dutch relied on their naval supremacy in dealing with England. When in 1618 a conference between the Netherlands and England with the object of amalgamating the Dutch and English India Companies, and thus abolishing unnecessary competition, took place, the Dutch haughtily refused to make any concessions to England; they reduced the English statements as to the profits of the English company at will, but did not recede by an inch from their own claims. However, 'for the sake of peace,' they were willing to consent to an amalgamation of the companies on the basis that the English should receive only a quarter share in their common enterprise. Not unnaturally the offer was declined. The terrible massacre of Englishmen by Dutchmen at Amboyna in 1622 was hushed up by the English government, notwithstanding the horror and indignation which that massacre had produced throughout the country, because of the naval supremacy of the Netherlands.[1]

In 1625 James I. died. His successor, Charles I., also endeavoured to develop the English fishing industry, and to oust the Dutch, but as his fishery companies proved unsuccessful, he reasserted James's claim to the dominion of the sea. Therefore the literature attacking the Dutch, animadverting on their rapacity, and pleading for their exclusion from the English seas, became more extensive and more violent. In 1633, for instance, Sir John Burroughs, Keeper of the Records in the Tower of London, wrote a pamphlet which concludes with the words, 'It evidently appears that the Kings of England, by immemorable prescription, continual usage and possession, the acknowledgment of all our neighbour States and the municipal law of the kingdom, have ever held the sovereign lordship of the seas of England, and that unto his Majesty, by reason of his sovereignty, the supreme command and jurisdiction over the passage and fishing in the same rightfully appertaineth. The sovereignty of our seas being the most precious jewel of his Majesty's crown, and next unto God the principal means of our wealth and safety

[1] Laspeyres, *Volkswirtschaftliche Anschauungen*, 1863, 67.*

all true English hearts and hands are bound by all possible means and diligences to preserve and maintain the same, even with the utmost hazard of their lives, their goods, and fortunes.'[1]

In 1617, John Selden, one of the greatest jurists of the time, had written a very learned refutation of Grotius's 'Mare Liberum,' entitled 'Mare Clausum,' but King James had prohibited its publication, apparently because he feared it would give umbrage to the Dutch. In 1635, Charles I. had Selden's work published; it was dedicated to the King, and it was treated as the official English exposition of international law with regard to the question of dominion of the sea. On the title-page of Selden's famous book we read:

'In the 1st it is shown that the sea by the law of nature or nations is not common to all men, but capable of private dominion or proprietie as well as the land.

'In the 2nd place it is proved that the dominion of the British sea or that which incompasseth the Isle of Great Britain is and ever hath been a part or appendant of the empire of that island.'

The concluding passage of Selden's book is most noteworthy, for the author declares, 'Without question it is true according to the collection of testimonies before alleged, that the very shores and ports of the neighbouring princes beyond sea are bounds of the sea territory of the British Empire to the southward and eastward, but that in the open and vast ocean of the north and west they are to be placed at the utmost extent of those spacious seas which are possessed by the English, Scotch, and Irish.[2] Wellwood had claimed only a belt of one hundred miles round the British Islands, to belong to Great Britain, Selden claimed proprietary right practically over the whole of the seas of the northern hemisphere.

Having, through Selden, proved to the world that, by the law of nations, England was entitled to reserve the fishing in the English seas exclusively to English citizens, and that the Dutch fishers were in the position of poachers, Charles I. published in 1636 a proclamation wherein he renewed the proclamation touching fishing which James I. had issued in 1609. As the

[1] Sir J. Burroughs, *The Soveraignty of the British Seas*, 1651.

[2] Selden, *Mare Clausum*, 1635.*

'expected voluntary conformity thereto' had not taken place, and as the illicit fishing of the Dutch had meanwhile 'rather increased than abated,' the King, 'obliged in honour to maintain the rights of his crown, has thought it necessary to renew the aforesaid restraint of fishing, and to declare that his resolution is to keep such a competent strength of shipping upon his seas as may be sufficient to hinder further encroachment upon his regalities.' [1] Charles I. threatened the Dutch with war if they continued fishing in the English seas. Aerssen reported from London to his government: 'The attitude of the English Court is very little in our favour. They envy us our prosperity.' [2]

During the rule of Charles I. the friction between the English and Dutch became very acute, and the disputes between the two nations became so heated that in the year 1636 the Dutch found it necessary to protect their herring fleet with warships. [3] Then Charles began to strengthen his naval armaments, for which 'ship money' was levied, and a collision between the Netherlands and England might have then taken place had not the internal troubles of England, which were largely caused through the illegality of levying 'ship money,' and which culminated in the Civil War, withdrawn attention from the Anglo-Dutch controversy.

During the stormy reign of Charles I. the trade of England decayed. The King's reckless expenditure led to an equally reckless taxation which crippled the commerce of the country. Lewes Roberts mentions that 'a ship of three hundred tons burden coming from Bordeaux would have to pay for customs and other charges £1,260 in England and only £60 in Holland.' [4]

Under such conditions it was natural that the trading predominance of the Dutch still further increased at England's expense, and that during Charles's reign the foreign trade of England fell almost completely into Dutch hands.

'It had been observed with concern that the merchants of England for several years past had usually freighted the

[1] Rapin, *History of England*, 1732, vol. ii. 294.
[2] *Archives d'Orange*, série ii. vol. iii. 73.**
[3] Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book xliii. chap. viii.*
[4] Lewes Roberts, *Treasure of Traffike*, 1641, 61.

Hollanders' shipping for fetching home their own merchandise because their freight was at a lower rate than that of English ships. The Dutch shippers were thereby made use of even for importing our own produce, whilst our own shipping lay rotting in our harbours. Our mariners also, for want of employment at home, went into the service of the Hollanders.'[1] If an English gentleman wished to send his trunks to France, he was compelled to ship them in a Dutch bottom to Calais or Rouen.'[2] The most profitable commerce between England and her American plantations also was carried on by the Dutch.[3] In maritime matters, England was fast becoming a dependency of the Netherlands, to the grief of all English patriots, who saw in sea power a necessary bulwark of England, as may be seen from the writings of Bacon, Raleigh, Shakespeare, Milton and many others.

The misgovernment under Charles I. and eight years of Civil War had maimed the right arm of England. While the country was being torn and impoverished by internal strife the Netherlands had captured the English trade. England's trouble was Holland's opportunity. The Dutch profited greatly by England's misfortunes and saw in the great tragedy of the Civil War an excellent opportunity for money-making. In 1649 they made use at the Russian Court of the execution of King Charles. By declaiming against the regicide English they succeeded in obtaining the great trade of Archangel, and in ousting the English Russia Company,[4] which had formerly carried on that trade. In the same year the Netherlands concluded a treaty with the King of Denmark whereby they farmed from him the toll of the Sound. All nations were henceforth to pay toll at Amsterdam instead of at Elsinore.[5] Needless to say the intention of the Netherlands was to monopolise the most important trade of the northern seas, by charging the toll to foreign ships, and giving to Dutch vessels the privilege of running free through the Sound.[6] Thus the Dutch meant

[1] A. Anderson, *History of Commerce*, 1764, vol. ii. 86.
[2] S. R. Gardiner, *History of the Commonwealth*, 1894, vol. ii. 81.*
[3] A. Anderson, *History of Commerce*, 1764, vol. ii. 67. [4] *Ibid.* 82.
[5] Aitzema, *Saken van Staet*, 1669, vol. iii. 335 ff.**
[6] Geddes, *John de Witt*, 1879, vol. i. 168.

to place their foreign commercial competitors, and especially England, whose largest trade was the Baltic trade, at a great disadvantage.

The policy of exploitation practised by the Dutch government, which recalled the fact that that government had under Barneveld's guidance tricked and practically defrauded England out of an enormous sum of money,[1] exasperated the political and commercial circles of England against the Dutch. They began to see in the Netherlands a heartless usurer and a vampire among nations, which, having grown prosperous by the decay of the Hanse towns, Flanders, Brabant and Spain, now prospered and increased by battening on the wealth and strength of wounded England.

In 1650 the Netherlands had arrived at the height of their prosperity. The trade of the United Provinces was five times larger than that of England.[2] Amsterdam, which in 1571 had covered only 200 morgen of land, covered 600 morgen of land in 1650. It contained in the latter year 300,000 people.[3] The capital of the Netherlands had no equal in the whole inhabited world, as regards trade, shipping, and maritime power.[4] The province of Holland had in consequence of its prosperity grown so enormously populous that it could with its own produce nourish not one-eighth of its inhabitants.[5]

The vast prosperity of the Netherlands had at first aroused the emulation of England. The continued lack of success in endeavouring to emulate the Dutch had converted England's emulation into envy, and envy into hatred. England felt herself to be humiliated, impoverished, and despoiled by the Dutch; the nation cried for revenge, the tone of the pamphlets in which the Netherlands were attacked became more and more aggressive. For instance, in 'The Seas Magazine Opened, or the Hollander Dispossessed,' which well reflects the prevailing temper of England, we read: 'They may be named the Golden Seas that surround our famous isle of Great Britain, for there are not three kings in Christendom that have so rich a blessing of God

[1] See page 191. [2] Treitschke, *Aufsätze*, 1886, vol. ii. 518.
[3] A. Anderson, *History of Commerce*, 1764, vol. ii. 85.
[4] Parival, *Délices de la Hollande*, 1669, 80.
[5] A. Anderson, *History of Commerce*, 1769, vol. ii. 85.

of fish in the seas as this commonwealth—which is a very great and rich treasury unto the Hollanders. . . . Now, if you take this fishing from them, then do they not only lose their profit thereof, but also those hundred thousand persons employed in it will lose their employment and be a heavy charge upon the Hollanders. . . . Under correction, I should think it agreeable with reason that we should take their shipping and goods as well. . . . Most worthy patriots, too, too long have the Hollanders enriched themselves by feeding on the fat of this commonwealth, and filling their chests and coffers with the treasury of our golden seas. The longer they be suffered, the stronger and richer they will be, but by God's holy assistance and the Parliament's providence, they may easily be subdued and brought to obedience.' [1]

The Parliament to which these remarkable proposals of despoiling the Dutch of all their wealth were addressed was Cromwell's Parliament; it was composed of men of action and of men of daring, and these men were cordially in sympathy with the anonymous writer who expressed the views which at the time were generally held among influential people in England. From year to year, from day to day, the exasperation of England and the tension between the two countries became greater. The Netherlands and England stood on the brink of war, and the only question was when the weak link of peace would break under the strain. The old war between a poor and warlike nation and a wealthy State which had grown effeminate, the war between Sparta and Athens, between Carthage and Rome, between Rome and the Goths, between the East Roman Empire and the Turks, had to be fought over again. Englishmen asked themselves the old question: 'Is it right that we, who are brave and strong, shall remain poor, while those cowardly shopkeepers who pay others to fight their battles enjoy all the riches of the world?'

No international tribunal could settle the differences between England and the Netherlands. The world was too small for the English and the Dutch, they could not peacefully live side by side. Their differences arose, not from a question of right, but from a question of might, and as the world is not to the weak but to the strong, might goes before right in practical politics.

[1] *The Seas Magazine Opened*, 1653, 13.

From the dawn of history to the present moment, experience has shown that in matters political might is stronger than right. The struggle for life and the survival of the fittest and strongest, which is the law of existence throughout the animal and vegetable kingdom, is a natural and universal law. It applies with equal force and authority to man and to his political associations.

CHAPTER XIV

ENGLAND ATTACKS AND DEFEATS THE NETHERLANDS, WHICH LOSE THE RULE OF THE SEA AND THEIR SOUTH AMERICAN COLONIES

'Many cities which seem the most prosperous consult most negligently the common good, and those which were the most elate have fallen into the greatest dangers. The reason for this is that unmixed good or ill is not the lot of human nature; that imprudence follows close upon riches and power, as well as its attendant, luxury; whereas, wisdom and moderation are the companions of poverty and want.'—ISOCRATES, *Seventh Oration.*

'Florence was a city of the greatest splendour, and the happiest commonwealth of the time. She abounded in people, riches and prestige, and was in so flourishing a condition that she feared no foe. She might have brought a body of forces into the field able to face the armies of all the other States of Italy put together. However, the mischief which foreign enemies were unable to do to them whilst they were united was unhappily effected by their own divisions.'—MACHIAVELLI, *History of Florence*, book ii.

'Every war which is necessary is just.'—MACHIAVELLI, *The Prince*, chap. xxvi.; *Titus Livius*, book ix. chap. i.

'Wars are no massacres and confusions, but the highest trials of right.'—BACON, *Certain Observations upon a Libel*, 1592.

THE Dutch were aware that they were hated by England with a fierce and passionate hatred, but they hoped that the storm would blow over. The amateur statesmen of the Netherlands were so absorbed with their private business and the party game that they could give only an occasional thought to foreign politics. They vaguely believed that the Netherlands and England, the two great Protestant republics, peopled by men of the same stock, and ruled by governments of the same form, were destined to be friends and allies, and, looking at war merely from their own point of view, the Dutch merchant statesmen asserted that peace was the greatest blessing to, and the greatest interest of, all nations. They thought a war with England most unlikely,

because England owed to the Netherlands a great debt of gratitude. It is true that the Dutch had aided England against the Invincible Armada,[1] and they had taught the English much in agriculture, manufacturing, commerce, fishing, navigation, and colonisation. However, in politics and in business interest is stronger than sentiment. England meant to break the power of the Netherlands for the same reason as that for which Rome destroyed Carthage.

The Dutch politicans lived in the past. They remembered that the Netherlands had defeated Spain, then the mightiest State on earth, and it seemed unthinkable to them that the Netherlands could now be defeated by England, especially as their boundless wealth could be rapidly converted into warships and mercenary soldiers. To the wealthy oligarchs of Holland wealth was synonymous with strength, although nothing can be more erroneous than that belief. 'Money is not the sinews of war. Plenty of money and treasure instead of securing a State, often exposes it to great danger and sometimes to ruin by tempting others to invade it. Therefore nothing can be more erroneous and absurd than the common saying "Money is the sinews of war." '[2] Sir Walter Raleigh, a disciple of Machiavelli, aptly observes in support of the foregoing opinion, 'The bodies of men, munition and money may justly be called the sinews of war, yet of them the two first are the most necessary, for men and arms have means to find money and meat; but money and meat cannot so easily find soldiers and swords.'[3]

Although the Dutch politicians constantly used trickery and violence in their home politics, they looked upon foreign politics and war from the sentimental point of view, and wrote and talked much in a poetical strain of the horrors of war, forgetting that war is a business transaction, upon which a nation enters in order to acquire wealth in some form or other, that it is a business transaction of which the possible profit and loss can to some extent be calculated. Looked upon as a game of chance it was clear that the chances in a war between the Netherlands and England would be all in favour of England. In 1652, one of

[1] See page 121.

[2] Machiavelli, *First Decade of Livius*, book ii. chap. 10.

[3] Sir Walter Raleigh, *Cabinet Council*, 25.

the Dutch ambassadors said when returning from England, 'The English are about to attack a mountain of gold; we are about to attack a mountain of iron.' The risks run by the two nations in war were indeed totally dissimilar. The Dutch had an enormous commerce to protect, with a navy which was small for its world-wide task. The English, on the other hand, though they possessed only an insignificant trade which was hardly worth protecting, had a large, well-equipped and efficient navy. Therefore practically the whole of their naval forces was available for an attack on the Netherlands.

In 1652, the year when the Anglo-Dutch war broke out, the Dutch republic received sustenance almost entirely through its enormous commerce, and its destruction would entail as a certainty the starvation, and consequently the submission, of the people. In view of that danger, the Dutch fleets would have to be employed for the protection of the Dutch trade; while there was comparatively little on the English side to invite attack. It follows that the English government, after detaching a few vessels to act as convoys to its merchantmen, had the whole of its remaining fleet disposable for service in any quarter, while the Dutch commanders were of necessity pinned down to certain trade routes, and their movements could be calculated to a nicety.[1]

After the *coup d'état* of 1650, when the politicians had abolished the stadtholdership, the one link which had held together the seven Dutch provinces, the disintegration and disorganisation of the Netherlands had made terribly rapid progress. The United Provinces were no longer a united State; in fact, they hardly succeeded in preserving the outward semblance of a State. On May 10, 1652, John de Witt, who later on became Pensioner of Holland, wrote, 'The English call the United Netherlands a republic, but these provinces are not a republic. Each province is an individual sovereign republic, and the United Provinces should not be called a republic in the singular, but federated or united republics in the plural.'[2]

De Witt's words were only too true. The introduction of Home Rule all round in the Netherlands, the destruction of

[1] S. R. Gardiner, *History of the Commonwealth*, 1894, vol. ii. 119–122.*

[2] Geddes, *John de Witt*, 1879, 152.

national cohesion and of the national administrative organisation and the constant differences between the seven united republics and between the unionist party and the party of disintegration had greatly diminished the prestige of the Netherlands with foreign Powers, and these speculated upon their divisions and endeavoured to utilise them. Ambassador van Beuningen wrote from Stockholm to de Witt in 1652: 'In consequence of the stormy and turbulent deliberations in the Netherlands with regard to the stadtholdership, the State is in danger of falling into contempt abroad.' In another letter he said: 'The bad effects of the continued disputes about the government of the country are felt even at the Court of Sweden, and they bring us into contempt. Our dissensions may therefore encourage dangerous projects.' Ambassador Beverningk wrote ten months later: 'So much weight is laid in England on the insubordination and disorder which prevail in our State that our enemies feel certain that we shall readily subscribe to any conditions they may propose as soon as we are threatened with foreign complications.'[1]

The preponderance of party-political over national interests, the absence of a powerful national central authority, and the lack of a stadtholder standing above the struggling parties and directing the whole State in a national sense, had undermined the foundations of the State and had set province against province, town against town, and man against man.

Provinces, towns, villages, politicians, officials, merchants, all worked for their own aggrandisement. All endeavoured to secure power and wealth at the cost of the nation—for where parties rule, everyone looks after his own interests and those of his party, none after those of the nation. The rule of the party politician had dissolved the State into a number of independent political units, which were constantly at war with each other for the spoils of the State. The national sense which manifests itself in combined action, in national co-operation, and in readiness to subordinate local interests, party interests, and personal interests to national interests, had been replaced by selfishness, euphemistically termed individualism.

The Unionist party—the national party which supported the House of Orange—had been crushed and was leaderless, but it

[1] Lefèvre-Pontalis, *John de Witt*, 1885, vol. i. 152.

was neither dispirited nor inactive. It wished for a rupture with England, because the leaders of that party hoped that, with the growth of danger, the nation would realise that the State required unity and a permanent chief, and that a foreign war might bring about the unification of the Netherlands and be the means of averting a still more terrible civil war. A foreign war had become the strongest hope of the Orange party.[1]

Cromwell would probably have refrained from hostilities against the Netherlands had he not been aware that the seven provinces had, after the abolition of the stadtholderate in 1650, become completely disunited, and that they had dismissed their troops and neglected their armaments to such an extent that they need no longer be considered a dangerous enemy. Therefore he began to provoke the Netherlands by acts of undisguised hostility. Numerous Dutch merchant vessels were taken by the English in time of peace, and the Dutch authorities, hoping against hope that peace might be preserved by fair words and a policy of conciliation, protested in vain against these attacks, in the name of international law, treaty rights, justice, and the freedom of commerce and navigation.[2]

Though war might break out at any moment, the Dutch were never so little prepared for it. Their organisation was deplorable. The suppression of the stadtholderate had broken up the administrative entity of the navy, and the five boards of admiralty,[3] formerly united by their dependence on the stadtholder in his capacity of admiral-general, were now isolated from one another.[4] In 1652 all was confusion in the Dutch navy. Ships, funds, stores, everything was lacking—but no other result could be expected from seven sovereign republics trying to equip a fleet through the instrumentality of five independent boards of admiralty, especially as the boards of admiralty had privileges of their own, quarrelled with the governing body of the provinces which they represented, and were almost small States within the State. 'In this, as in every department of the administration, there was felt the want of a strong executive power, a part of whose unquestioned duty it would have been to see that the

[1] *Archives d'Orange*, série ii. vol. v. 13.**
[2] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 424.*
[3] See page 275 f.
[4] S. R. Gardiner, *History of the Commonwealth*, 1896, vol. ii. 115.*

necessary things would be done and to compel their doing.'[1] The admiralties were hot-beds of corruption and models of maladministration. Complaints about their inefficiency and dishonesty were heard during the whole of the seventeenth century.[2]

Although the command of the sea was then as important to the Netherlands as it is now to the British Empire, the naval defence of the country, of its possessions, of its immense trade and of its food supply, had not been studied and organised by experts in time of peace. The maritime organisation of the Netherlands, like that of the British Empire, was the creation of time and chance, and the naval administration was carried on with that scrupulous regard to precedent which sanctifies all abuses, and kills all common sense, progress and reform.

During the first twenty years of the war with Spain, the naval defence of the Netherlands had been left to enterprising individuals, who chose to attack the Spaniards on the sea, and to the fleets of individual towns. Only in 1589, five years after the murder of Prince William of Orange, had the States-General created a central admiralty board, composed of six councillors taken from Holland, West Frisia, Zeeland, and Friesland, with the Prince of Orange as admiral-general. Guelderland and Utrecht had reserved to themselves the right of adding councillors of their own. This central admiralty board was to control the five provincial admiralty boards. In 1597, the individual provinces and towns relinquished the right of sending out fleets in favour of the States-General representing the nation. This right would probably not have been given up by them had necessity not made that step compulsory.[3]

The naval organisation of the Netherlands bore a curiously individualistic and archaic character, resembling that of their East India Company.[4] Not a national admiralty but five separate provincial admiralties managed and controlled the navy. Of the five admiralties, three were domiciled in the province of Holland, one in Rotterdam, one in Amsterdam, and the third alternatively in Hoorn and Enkhuizen; the fourth admiralty

[1] Geddes, *John de Witt*, 1879, vol. i. 205.

[2] Pringsheim, *Beiträge*, 1890, 3.

[3] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 109.* See page 132 ff.

was established in Middelburg, in the province of Zeeland, the fifth at Dokkum in Frisia. Every province strove to control its own part of the navy, and to exercise a commanding influence over its admiralty board.[1] The five naval boards, like the seven provinces, formed a loose, ill-defined, and exceedingly complicated partnership or alliance. Throughout the political and military organisation of the republic, the principle prevailed that the part is greater than the whole, that local and individual privileges are more important than the rights of the nation, that local independence and supremacy are a more precious possession than efficiency and national safety.

Before the stadtholderate had been abolished, the Prince of Orange, or in his absence his lieutenant, was, as representative of the nation, the acting president of the central admiralty board, and therefore of all the local admiralty boards. In other words, the head of the national executive was at the same time the head of the admiralty. Thus an exalted personage, owing obedience to no party, controlled the navy in the interests of the nation, and could not be over-ruled by the champions of party interests, local interests, and private interests, in matters of naval policy and administration.

After the *coup d'état* of 1650, there was no longer an effective national control over the five admiralty boards. The navy became a plaything in the hands of the party politicians, efficiency was subordinated to party-political convenience, and the navy ceased to be an effective instrument for war. That State which had by far the greatest commerce and the greatest maritime interests in the world allowed its navy to decay.

The grave defects of the Dutch navy were unknown in the Netherlands except among the initiated few, and the naval experts who pressed for the necessary reforms were silenced by the politicians in power. However, the bad state of the fleet was well-known to the statesmen of England. Most patriotic Dutchmen were convinced that their navy, which hitherto had defeated all its opponents, and which was commanded by experienced admirals and manned by excellent sailors, would easily defeat the fleets of England, of which little was known except that the royalist officers had disappeared, and that the ships had been

[1] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 95.*

handed over to Colonels Blake, Dean, Popham, and Monk, and their soldiers. The English fleet was manned by amateurs, and the Dutch people felt confident that the celebrated Dutch navy which had ruled the sea for such a long time was the best in the world, and that it could not possibly be defeated by Cromwell's 'colonels at sea.' The Dutch politicians, who were better informed as to the real state of affairs, felt less assured about the issue of an Anglo-Dutch war, and had grave doubts whether the Dutch fleet would be fit to meet the English navy, especially as their experts had continually warned them that they had starved and mismanaged their fleet.

Unjustified confidence in their navy led to political recklessness on the part of the Dutch people, while the consciousness of the lack of naval preparedness led to futile and pitiful attempts on the part of the leading Dutch politicians to conciliate England by fair words, and to avoid a war.

Early in the year 1651 Cromwell had proposed to the Netherlands the conclusion of an Anglo-Dutch coalition. This proposal was favoured by the Dutch politicians but opposed by the masses, for the Dutch people, who had always been unionists and Orangists at heart, and who distrusted their oligarchs, instinctively felt the danger which threatened them from the English republic. The instinct of the people with regard to foreign politics, which is so often superior to the laboured wisdom of the diplomats, proved to be correct. The Dutch people demonstrated their views on foreign policy very forcibly by breaking the windows of the politicians who favoured an Anglo-Dutch coalition, and by pelting the ambassadors of the English republic with mud and stones, amid wild cheering for King Charles II. of England and for the Prince of Orange.

Wishing to conciliate both the English government and the Dutch people, the Dutch politicians tolerated these hostile demonstrations, feebly endeavouring to explain them away to the English, and dragged out the negotiations interminably, hoping that time might bring about a favourable change in Anglo-Dutch relations. Like Mr. Micawber, the Dutch politicians in their difficulty waited for something to turn up. Therefore their policy was mainly directed towards gaining time by talking and writing much and doing nothing.

Although the Dutch oligarchs, and especially those of the province of Holland, professed the greatest sympathy with the English Commonwealth, they wished to stand well also with the English princes whom Cromwell had driven out of England, and who had found a refuge in the Netherlands. Thinking that these princes might possibly regain power, the Dutch politicians were doubtful as to whether they should favour the royalist or the republican party in England, and came to the conclusion that it would be better for them to be neutral.

Neutrality is not a policy, but an unmistakeable sign of indecision arising from a keen sense of weakness, when the safety of the country compels the statesman to declare himself without delay. The lamentable attitude of vacillation and foolish duplicity towards both the English government and the Dutch people, the smooth talk of conciliation and peace, of moral suasion and determination, deceived only the Dutch people. The English became infuriated at the shiftiness of the Dutch, and accused the Dutch politicians loudly of insincerity and deceit. The English ambassador left the Netherlands after having spent several months in fruitless negotiations, which had only served to increase the tension, and the Dutch ran after him with a present.

'People who think that they can influence the proud and arrogant by moderation and courtesy are mistaken, for the proud and arrogant will argue that the moderation and courtesy of their opponents are due to the consciousness of their weakness.'[1] The dilatory policy of the Dutch and their conciliatory attitude, notwithstanding England's acts of undisguised hostility, convinced Cromwell that the procrastination by the Netherlands was due to the fact that they were unable to resist England on the sea, and he resolved to attack them without delay.

The first attack upon the Dutch was an act of commercial aggression, which was to have the most far-reaching consequence upon the trade of the Netherlands and of Great Britain. On October 9, 1651, the English Parliament passed the famous Act of Navigation. This Act had a double object. It was intended not only to promote the navigation of Great Britain, but also to strike a decisive blow at the naval supremacy of the Dutch. The Act decreed that no goods or commodities whatever

[1] Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, book ii. chap. xiv.

grown, produced, or manufactured in Asia, Africa or America, should be imported either into England or Ireland, or any of the English plantations, except in ships belonging to English subjects, of which the master and the greater number of the crew were of English nationality. Having thus reserved the important trade of Asia, Africa and America to English shipowners and sailors, the Act went on to reserve to them as far as possible the trade of Europe. For this purpose, it was enacted that no goods grown, produced or manufactured in any country of Europe should be imported into Great Britain, except in British ships, or in such ships as were the property of the people of the country or place in which the goods were produced. The latter part of the clause was levelled directly against the Dutch, who had but little native produce to export, and whose ships were mostly employed in carrying the produce of other countries to foreign markets.[1]

The Navigation Act proved the death-blow to the profitable trade which the Netherlands had built up with Great Britain and her colonies.[2] Henceforth the Dutch were entirely excluded from being the carriers to Great Britain or from importing to Great Britain the goods of any other European country.[3]

The politicians endeavoured to explain away the terrible blow which Cromwell had struck at the trade of the Netherlands. The Dutch believed, or at least they pretended to believe, that the Navigation Act would be more harmful to England than to the Netherlands, and that it would therefore be abrogated,[4] exactly as British free trade politicians believed, or at least professed to believe, that the high protective duties charged by foreign countries on British exports would be speedily abolished because they would prove more harmful to the country charging those protective duties than to Great Britain. It is true that the immediate effect of the Navigation Act was unfavourable to England. English ships cost more to build than Dutch ships, and the expulsion of Dutch shipping caused a scarcity in shipping, an increased demand for tonnage, a rise in the price of

[1] MacCulloch, *Dictionary of Commerce*, Art. 'Navigation Laws.'
[2] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. ii. 67.*
[3] Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, book iv. chap. ii.
[4] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 249.*

freights and of ships, and consequently a diminution of England's foreign trade.[1] Hence, shipbuilding in England was in 1653 upwards of 30 per cent. more expensive than it had been before the Navigation Act was passed, and the seamen's wages rose to such an extent, owing to the scarcity of English seamen, that the Russian trade and the Greenland trade were completely paralysed.[2]

Violent remedies often make the patient feel worse before their beneficial action becomes apparent. At first the novelty of the Navigation Act, and the ignorance of some traders, occasioned loud complaints that, though the British people had not enough shipping to import those articles of merchandise which they required, they were nevertheless by this law debarred from receiving new supplies of merchandise from other nations, who only could, and till then did, import them. Those complaints were, however, overruled by the government, who foresaw that this Act would in the end prove the great means of reserving the trade with the English plantations entirely to England, of increasing the shipping and the number of sailors of Great Britain, and of drawing the profits made in shipping away from the Dutch and giving them to Englishmen.[3] For some time the Navigation Act was certainly unprofitable to England, but it was ruinous to the Netherlands, England's great maritime competitor, who hitherto had almost monopolised the trade and navigation of the world. The Navigation Act made England a great maritime Power, and it must be considered as the foundation stone of Great Britain's maritime supremacy and of the British Empire.

By the rigorous application of the Navigation Act the British nation was greatly benefited, though considerable injustice and injury were no doubt caused to a small number of individuals. Their complaints were not heeded by the government, for no sudden change in a long-established trade, however beneficial the change may prove in the end, can be introduced without loud complaints from those individuals whose monopoly, real or virtual, has been destroyed. The outcry against the

[1] Toynbee, *The Industrial Revolution*, 1887, 78.
[2] *Jahrbuch für Deutschland's Seeinteressen*, 1900, 162.
[3] Macpherson, *Annals of Commerce*, 1805, 1651.

Navigation Act was very loud, but it was doubtlessly exaggerated, and the complaints against that Act originated largely in the mortification felt by the foreign shipping agents and merchants in London, whose occupation was gone and whose principals abroad had for centuries enjoyed an undue share in the shipping trade of Great Britain.[1] Even Adam Smith, the determined enemy of all legislative enactments beneficial to trade, called the Act of Navigation 'perhaps the wisest of all commercial regulations of England, as defence is of much more importance than opulence,'[2] and it is noteworthy that the Navigation Act was the one legislative achievement of the Commonwealth which not only found favour in the eyes of the Parliament of the Restoration, but was actually rendered more stringent in 1660.[3]

The Act of Navigation, and the numerous captures of Dutch merchantmen made by English ships in time of peace, led only to protests and remonstrances on the part of the Dutch. To English acts of hostility the Dutch opposed nothing stronger than words. When the English had taken more than two hundred ships, the Dutch in their fatuity still trusted to the efficacy of their moderation and to negotiations, refusing to believe that Cromwell was determined on their spoliation, their self-humiliation notwithstanding.[4] At last a chance collision occurred, in May 1652, between the Dutch and the English fleets, and the first Anglo-Dutch war began.

'The Dutch government, averse from expense, unmilitary in its tone, and incautious from long and easy victories over the degenerate navy of Spain, had allowed its fleet to sink into a mere assembly of armed merchantmen. Things were at their worst in the days of Cromwell.[5] The inferiority of the Dutch navy was startling. In 1653 the English fleet had 58 ships of more than 40 guns, while the Dutch had only 15 ships of more than 40 guns. The biggest English ship carried 700 men, the biggest Dutch ship 250 men.'[6]

[1] Lindsay, *History of Merchant Shipping*, 1874, vol. ii. 442.
[2] A. Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, book iv. chap. ii.
[3] Gardiner, *Commonwealth*, 1894, vol. ii. 85–6.*
[4] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 425.*
[5] Mahan, *Sea Power*, 1890, 126.
[6] De Jonge, *Zeewezen*, 1858, vol. i. 483 ff *, 761 ff.*

Although the Dutch navy was far inferior to the English navy in material, it might, and probably would, have been victorious, for it was commanded by van Tromp and de Ruyter, two of the greatest admirals whom the world has seen. However, the skill and courage of these two men proved unavailing, for they had to fight not only against superior numbers and superior strength, but also against the consequences of the incapacity of a civilian government whose bungling and incompetent administration had utterly neglected the navy, denuded the magazines, and was unable to produce at the critical moment the material necessary for battle. Merchantmen could in case of need be transformed into warships, but there was a great scarcity of guns. A hundred guns were hastily purchased in Sweden, but the Swedish government did not allow the sale and 'caused a serious embarrassment and dearth of guns to the Dutch government, as may easily be imagined.'[1]

Through the incapacity of the admiralties, in which civilian party-politicians mismanaged affairs, the greatest Dutch admirals were defeated. During the three days' battle in February 1653, for instance, van Tromp, though hampered with the convoy of 150 merchant ships, heroically faced an English fleet of equal numbers, but composed of ships every one of which was in fighting power far superior to the Dutch vessels against which they were pitted. The battle ended disastrously for the Dutch, because, since December 1652, van Tromp's ships had not been replenished with ammunition and stores.[2]

Before setting out on his calamitous errand, Admiral van Tromp had complained bitterly to the government about the unsatisfactory character of his ships, and the bad state of the fleet, and had expressed grave fears as to the result.[3] But his complaints were not listened to, as an acknowledgement of their justification would have meant the condemnation of the politicians who had directed affairs. Therefore these silenced van Tromp, and attributed his defeat to his incapacity.

Inquiries into the unpreparedness of the fleet, lack of ammunition, &c., by a committee of the States-General, were afterwards made, but the facts were obscured in a cloud of official contra-

[1] De Witt, letter to Ambassador de Groot, August 20, 1668.

[2] De Jonge, *Zeewezen*, 1858, vol. i. 483 ff, 499.* [3] *Ibid.* 115.*

dictions. There was no power in the country, split up into Home-rule fragments and buried under formulas, privileges, precedents, and red-tape routine, which was strong enough to visit such criminal negligence with punishment.[1]

At the battle of the Gabbard, on June 3, 1652, van Tromp discovered that, as on that sad day when he found himself helpless off Cape Gris Nez, his powder was running short, and de With announced that he had no more than would suffice him for three hours. De Ruyter had even less. Once more, a wretched administration of the republic had provided disaster for her fleet.[2] Notwithstanding the experience and bravery of the greatest Dutch admirals, the English navy was victorious, and their victory was attributable mainly to superior administration on the English side.[3]

The rule of civilian amateurs experienced in political intrigue and in wordy warfare, but ignorant of naval warfare and naval administration, had led not only to muddle in the providing of the naval material but to depreciation of the human material. Promoting men because of their political weight and influence, qualities which were of greater importance and of greater value from the politicians' point of view than maritime experience, ability, and courage, the Dutch oligarchs had destroyed the excellence of the personnel of the navy. Admiral van Tromp complained bitterly that his officers had not properly assisted him in battle, that they had been badly chosen, and that they possessed neither courage nor experience. He also declared that his captains and his seamen were so bad that he had greater trouble in protecting himself against the violence of his men than against the English fleet.[4] Other Dutch admirals complained as bitterly as did van Tromp about the inferiority of their ships, with which they were expected to defeat the English fleet. Vice-Admiral Witte de With, for instance, who had been dispatched with a squadron to intercept a fleet of English vessels carrying fuel from Newcastle to London, found no opportunity for an attack, and reported to the States-General on his return to the Netherlands that nearly all the eighty ships which had been

[1] Geddes, *De Witt*, 1879, 286.
[2] Gardiner, *Commonwealth*, 1894, vol. ii. 337.*
[3] *Ibid.* 339.*
[4] Comte de Guiche, *Mémoires*, 1744, vol. i. 43.*

given him for his task were unfit for service.[1] So bad was the state of the Dutch navy that the admirals jointly declared to the States-General that they would no longer serve unless they were reinforced by a large number of well-equipped ships; that there were fifty ships in the English fleet of which the worst was better than that of Admiral Tromp; that thirty ships in the Dutch fleet were unfit to fight against the enemy. Admiral de Ruyter announced that he would not again go to sea unless the fleet was strengthened with many better ships than those provided hitherto. Admiral de With declared before the States-General, 'The English are our masters and therefore the masters of the sea.' In a written report signed by the four admirals it was stated that the ships were too small, the guns too light, and the seamen too few; that powder, ammunition and provisions were lacking.[2] The naval officers were ill-trained, incapable, stupid, knowing neither how to command nor to obey.[3]

The strife between the parties of union and of disintegration which had split asunder the whole of the United Provinces, had unfortunately spread to the Dutch navy, and the individual naval contingents of the various provinces were as ready to 'secede' as were the provinces themselves. At the battle of October 8, 1652, de With was abandoned by part of the ships, which were manned chiefly by Zeelanders. This desertion was not due to cowardice, but to the political sentiment prevailing in Zeeland; for that province had always championed the cause of union and of the Prince of Orange, and was boiling over with indignation at the usurpation of the oligarchs, and at their policy of disintegration.[4]

The first great naval battle had been fought on the English coast, but the inferiority of the Dutch fleet had transferred the theatre of war to the coast of the Netherlands. The United Provinces were blockaded by England. On August 8, 1653, van Tromp attacked the English fleet off the Texel, although it was composed of more ships and far better ships than his own. Most English vessels seemed like floating castles and citadels,

[1] Aitzema, *Saken van Staet*, iii. 809 ff.**
[2] Brandt, *Vie de de Ruyter*, 1698, 36.*
[3] *Ibid.* 21.*
[4] Geddes, *De Witt*, 1879, 255.

compared with the Dutch vessels.[1] In spite of his skill and determination, the great sea hero was defeated, and he fell in battle, having found the death which he sought. 'In this shameful manner were the Dutch beaten who were so mighty at sea that they were a terror to the universe.' [2]

After van Tromp's death, John de Witt, who meanwhile had become Grand Pensioner of Holland, wrote: 'The Almighty has deprived us of a sea hero such as the world has never before produced, and will perhaps seldom produce again.' [3] The politicians did justice, in words, to the great hero after his death. They erected a fine monument to his memory, after having murdered him through their bungling. During his life-time they had treated him unjustly and shabbily because he had been indiscreet enough to show that his love for his country was greater than his love for the ruling political party. It was almost inevitable that men of action should be favourable to the party of union, and in spite of Tromp's unswerving fidelity to his country, the knowledge that his sympathies lay with the Orange party exposed him to suspicion on the part of the politicians. His failure to save the herring fleet was unjustly thrown in his teeth, and the great seaman was suspended from his command while an inquiry was held into the causes of that disaster.[4] His crime was that Prince Frederick Henry had promoted him from the position of a seaman to the lieutenant-admiralship of Holland. The politicians contemplated condemning him to death for his lack of success, which was solely due to their own improvidence.[5]

Party politicians never hesitate to make the ablest servants of the nation responsible for their own incapacity and to sacrifice them in order to shield themselves from the consequences of their mismanagement. Vittor Pisani, the greatest admiral whom the republic of Venice ever had, was thrown into prison to punish him for the naval disaster before Pola, which would have been avoided had his counsel been taken, for he had given battle by the express

[1] Neuville, *Histoire de la Hollande*, 1703, vol. iii. 43.*
[2] Parival, *History of This Iron Age*, 1659, 279.
[3] De Witt to Ambassador Boreel, August 15, 1653.
[4] Gardiner, *Commonwealth*, 1894, vol. ii. 133.*
[5] Comte de Guiche, *Mémoires*, 1744, vol. i. 44.*

order of the senate, contrary to his own judgment. Only the extremity of his country, when she was attacked by Genoa, drew him from the dungeon.[1] Many instances of the politician's ingratitude may be quoted from English and American history.

Party politicians rule a nation for party ends. The Dutch oligarchs, instead of giving the command of the fleet after van Tromp's death to one of their ablest admirals, such as de Ruyter, Evertsen, or de With, placed their squadron under the command of Jacob Obdam, a colonel of cavalry, who was considered politically a safe man,[2] although he had hitherto had no experience in navigation except on Dutch canals, and although he had not even on land gained any reputation for himself. The cause of his promotion over the heads of the experienced Dutch admirals was due to the fact that he was an enemy of the House of Orange, and a friend of John de Witt.[3] *Manus manum lavat.*

In the course of the war, the activity of the English ships was so great that Dutch traders preferred sending their ships round the stormy north of Ireland and Scotland to sending them through the Channel, but notwithstanding that precaution, innumerable ships laden with the merchandise of America and the Indies were taken by the English. Many of the Dutch merchantmen which tried to reach the Netherlands on that circuitous route ran aground or were lost in storms. The defeat of the Dutch at sea, the loss of the command of the sea, and the appearance of English ships on the Dutch coast spread consternation throughout the United Provinces. De Witt wrote: 'Nobody is loading ships to go out; the herring fishery stands still, rye and grain are rapidly rising in price, and thousands of men, having neither work nor food, turn to wrongdoing, plundering and robbing.'[4] So great was the fear of a descent on the part of the English, that at large cost infantry and cavalry had hastily to be raised, and to be sent to the various provinces in order to reassure the inhabitants.[5]

A successful war is as a rule profitable, an unsuccessful war ruinous, to a great commercial nation. During the two years of war against Cromwell, the commerce of the Netherlands had

[1] Sismondi, *Républiques Italiennes*, 1840, vol. v. 13 ff.
[2] Lefèvre-Pontalis, *De Witt*, 1885, vol. i. 138.
[3] Comte de Guiche, *Mémoires*, 1744, vol. i. 54.*
[4] Geddes, *De Witt*, 1879, 328.
[5] Neuville, *Histoire de la Hollande*, 1703, vol. iii. 43.*

suffered more injury than it had suffered during eighty years of successful war against Spain.[1] The devastation of the Channel trade ruined many merchants, and the extinction of the herring and whale fisheries reduced, according to Aitzema, 100,000 men and women, and, according to Wicquefort, 150,000 people, to starvation.[2] In 1650, the ordinary customs received by the Amsterdam Admiralty amounted to 1,999,829 florins; in 1653 they fell to 708,953 florins. Trade had apparently been reduced to about one-third of its former volume in consequence of the war.[3] In Amsterdam, that once busy mart, 3,000 houses were standing empty, and the grass was growing in many of the streets. A glover who had employed forty-eight hands was now working as a journeyman; whilst a manufacturer of silk bone-lace who, in better times, had found employment for 300 or 400 girls, had been compelled to dismiss all but three.[4] Rembrandt was among the victims of the war. He went bankrupt, and all his property, including his art collection, which comprised works by van Eyck, Raphael, Palma Vecchio, Michel Angelo, Giorgione, &c., fetched but 5,000 gulden or £500.

The Netherlands were a prey to starvation and despair, their colonies were decaying and their vast possessions in Brazil were lost to them in consequence of the war. Obliged to use all their strength against England, the Netherlands could not at the same time defend their colonies against the Portuguese, who naturally took advantage of the weakness of the Dutch. According to Wagenaar, the loss of Brazil was due to the lack of provisions and war materials; according to the author of 'La Richesse de la Hollande,' it was due to their dissensions and their lack of unity which hindered them from taking the necessary resolutions and the necessary measures in time; for when immediate action was necessary, the Dutch politicians indulged in futile discussion and mutual recrimination, and prevented one another from acting.[5] Government by squabbling, misnamed government by discussion, produced disaster after disaster both in Europe and the colonies.

[1] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 197.*
[2] Geddes, *De Witt*, 1879, 278.
[3] Pringsheim, *Beiträge*, 1890, 13.
[4] Gardiner, *Commonwealth*, 1894, vol. ii. 331.
[5] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. ii. 101.*

Soon the Dutch people began to wince under the grip of poverty and starvation, and to murmur against the prosecution of the war. The citizens of Holland and Zeeland especially, who were most interested in trade, and who had in time of peace most violently opposed the spending of money for the defence of the Netherlands, clamoured now most loudly for peace, and demanded that peace should be concluded immediately and at any price. Disgusted with the mismanagement of the oligarchs, the people demanded that the stadtholderate, which gave unity to the nation, should be restored. John de Witt, the leader of the burgher party, described, on July 10, 1658, the position of the Netherlands in a letter, as follows: 'Some are now striving to fish in troubled waters, and clamour that a leader is wanted for the State, and that everything will go worse until a chief is appointed. This idea has taken such a hold upon the public mind that hardly one man in a thousand is free from it.' [1]

The masses, which were devoted to the House of Orange, became exasperated at its exclusion, and at the ingratitude of the burgher politicians to that family which had made the Netherlands a great nation. Riots occurred, and the leading burgher politicians had to hide themselves through fear of the mob.[2]

Being attacked without and divided within, the Netherlands applied for help to their neighbours, one by one; but among all the Powers of Europe, which had been the friends and allies of the Dutch during the time of their prosperity, none would assist them in the day of adversity. A rich man in distress has few friends.

France desired that peace should be concluded between the English and the Dutch, but her attempts at mediation proved fruitless. John de Witt and his friends, the leaders of the Anti-Orangist party, were for party-political reasons deaf to all advances made by Cardinal Mazarin. Ambassador Chanut wrote on February 19, 1658, from The Hague to Cardinal Mazarin: 'Peace is very necessary for the Netherlands. Nevertheless the Dutch do not desire our help against England, because the King of France wishes to re-establish the Stuart monarchy in England, while Holland, on the contrary, wishes that the House of Stuart

[1] Geddes, *De Witt*, 1879, 328–9.

[2] Neuville, *Histoire de la Hollande*, 1703, vol. iii. 46.*

should never again come to power in that country, because of its alliance with the House of Orange. This is the foundation of the Dutch policy, and no offers on our part will alter it, and our representations will have no effect.'[1] Peace was sacrificed to the supremacy of the party in power.

From the foregoing it appears that, owing to their unfortunate constitution and to the prevailing political spirit, the Netherlands were neither able to make war nor to make peace, but were drifting on in an ineffectively conducted and ruinous war. The politicians' intrigues had brought the United Provinces into that humiliating position, and the politicians' intrigues at last extricated them. While Great Britain and the United Netherlands were still at war, the province of Holland set up clandestine negotiations for peace, negotiations which were certainly unlawful, and which further widened the breach which had been made in the Union. That province which had been primarily responsible for the disorganisation of the State and for the miseries of the country sought for peace, although this diplomatic step was certainly opposed to the Union of Utrecht by the articles of which individual provinces were forbidden to treat with foreign Powers except with the consent of the other provinces.[2]

The underhand way in which the negotiations for peace were set on foot, not by the Dutch nation but by a province, or rather by the ruling faction of a province, clearly showed to England that the Netherlands were no longer a nation. Hence Cromwell could easily insist on conditions of peace which he would have been unable to exact had the Dutch provinces still possessed a national organisation, national unity and a national chief.

It may be doubted whether the Dutch were wise in suing for peace in 1653. Had the Netherlands been an organised State directed by a national government, they would probably have fought the war against England to the end, and, owing to their wealth, they would very likely have prevailed. In the following chapter it will appear that peace was concluded less from national necessity than in order to secure the shaken position of the predominant party; that in making a disgraceful peace the leaders

[1] *Archives d'Orange*, série ii. vol. v. 15.**

[2] See p. 100.

of the party of disintegration worked for their own ends and took little thought of the honour of the nation and of its future.

A few decades ago, Darwin proved scientifically that the whole animal and vegetable creation is engaged in a constant war, the struggle for existence, which results in the survival of the fittest. In nature might is right, and the law of the survival of the fittest applies also to man and to the societies which he forms. The law of the survival of the fittest may be hard and cruel, but it is beneficial and necessary, for it is the mother of progress. It has converted savages into civilised men, it has created tribes, states and empires, and it compels civilised men and states constantly to advance, not only in culture and opulence, but also in strength, or to disappear. By superior strength, coupled with skill, the Dutch had possessed themselves of wealth, ships and colonies, and only by superior strength could they preserve their possessions.

Providence has no favourites. Every nation has an equally strong right to the good things of this world, and the Dutch could not claim that they were unaware of the fact that, broadly speaking, might is right in international relations.

Two years before the outbreak of the first Anglo-Dutch war Thomas Hobbes had written, 'Many desire one and the same thing at once which frequently they neither can nor will enjoy in common nor yet divide. Hence it follows that the desired objects must be given to the stronger and who is the stronger can be known only by fighting.'[1] Two thousand years earlier Brennus, King of the Gauls, invaded Italy and told the Romans who complained of his aggression: 'I have come to revenge the injury that is done to us by your keeping us who are many and poor out of large and fruitful territories of which only a part is cultivated. There is nothing either unjust or immoral in our subduing our neighbours and appropriating their possessions. We only follow the oldest of laws, the law of nature, which commands the weak to obey the strong. Gods, men and beasts obey that universal law.'[2]

England had as good a claim to wealth, ships, colonies, and empire as had the Netherlands. The question whether the world

[1] Thos. Hobbes, *De Corpore Politico*, i. 5.

[2] Plutarch, *Camillus*.

should become Dutch or Anglo-Saxon could not be decided in any way except by war. When in matters of vital importance two nations cannot possibly agree, war must decide their differences. Therefore wars are necessary between nations, and 'wars are no massacres and confusions, but the highest trials of Right,'[1] and 'every war which is necessary is just.'[2]

[1] Bacon, *Certain Observations upon a Libel*, 1592.

[2] Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chap. xxvi.; *Titus Livius*, book ix. chap. i.

CHAPTER XV

THE DUTCH POLITICIANS UTILISE THE DEFEAT OF THE NETHERLANDS FOR STRENGTHENING THEIR OWN POSITION AND FOR WEAKENING THE OPPOSITION, AND NEGLECT TO REFORM THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY ORGANISATION OF THEIR COUNTRY

'Men, striving after power, in order to satisfy either their rapacity or their ambitions, are ever eager to engage in party strife.'—THUCYDIDES, book iii.

'The possession of power with its attendants, patronage, honour, places, wealth, impunity for malversation, indemnity against charges of maladministration, all the benefits that uncontrolled dominion can bestow upon those who are clothed with it—this is the object of party combinations, and to this every other consideration, among the rest all regard to public duty, all concern for the interests of the community, is sacrificed without hesitation, without scruple and without remorse. This is the first and it is the worst of the evil effects which party produces.'—BROUGHAM, *Political Philosophy*, vol. ii. 37.

'Party politics are a deadly disease in the State. They are antagonistic to the national interests. Party politicians do not ask themselves: What is good for the nation? National interests may suffer, people may be sold up or die of hunger, what does it matter to them if only their party flourishes. *Vivat fractio, pereat mundus.*'—BISMARCK, Speech, May 9, 1884.

PARTY interests and national interests, party loyalty and patriotism, are antagonistic to each other. In countries where party government prevails there may be many factions, but there are, for practical purposes, only two parties, the party in power and the party out of power, and the party out of power tries by every means to oust the governing party in order itself to rule. Self-preservation is the first law, and the first instinct, of nature. Hence the politicians in power are always more eager to defend and to strengthen their position and that of their party, and to attack and weaken the opposition party, than to defend and to

strengthen the State. Therefore, it is inevitable that in a State which is ruled by a government representing not the nation but a party, party interests prevail over national interests, and that national welfare is sacrificed to party-political convenience.

In the war with Cromwell the Dutch had been disastrously defeated because the lack of national unity and union, of a national government, and of a national administrative organisation and the rule of irresponsible party politicians and amateurs had led to the neglect of the national defence, and had made an adequate military resistance impossible. The Dutch system of government had proved a failure. A disorganised nation divided against itself and ruled by orators quarrelling among themselves had been easily defeated by an organised and centralised State ruled by experts. Consequently, it might have been expected that the terrible lesson of the war would have opened the eyes of the Dutch; that that disastrous defeat would have caused the ruling politicians immediately to reorganise the State, to unify the nation, and to create a national defensive force. However, as in a State ruled by party politicians national interests are habitually sacrificed to party interests, nothing was done to prevent the recurrence of disasters similar to those which, two years after the abolition of the stadtholderate, the Netherlands had experienced. On the contrary, the ruling politicians callously strove to use the misfortunes of the nation for their own benefit and aggrandisement.

Before taking note of the policy which the Dutch pursued after their defeat, we must cast a glance at John de Witt, the Pensioner of the province of Holland and the ruling politician of the Netherlands.

John de Witt was born in 1625, and was therefore only twenty-eight years old when, in 1653, he was elected to the most important position in the Netherlands; but, notwithstanding his youth, he possessed in the eyes of the ruling party excellent qualifications for his high office. His father, Jacob de Witt, one of the ruling oligarchs of Dordrecht, had, as we have seen in a preceding chapter,[1] been one of the leaders of the party of disintegration, and had been arrested and imprisoned in the fortress of Louvestein by the ill-fated William II. John de Witt had

[1] See page 229.

inherited his father's policy, and his jealousy and hatred of the policy of national union and of the House of Orange. That fact alone was a strong recommendation in the eyes of the oligarchs, who wanted not a statesman but a determined champion of local privileges, an able party leader, at the head of the State. They thought 'vivat fractio, pereat mundus.' By his birth, character, education, and inherited interests John de Witt was likely to be a staunch supporter of the local interests and privileges and an implacable enemy of the party of national union and of centralisation and of the House of Orange.

John de Witt was a hard worker, sober and modest in his manner, a good conversationalist, an excellent singer, musician and dancer; he could play games of every kind, he was a good horseman, and he excelled in every kind of sport. He was widely read, he had studied philosophy, and he was a great mathematician. He was a lawyer by profession, and he was talented, cultured, ambitious, and unscrupulous. Such men go far in a State ruled by the power of the tongue and of intrigue, and they are extremely dangerous. 'Among his brothers at the Bar there were some who shook their heads at John de Witt, saying, "This young man flies too high; he will not die a natural death."'[1] According to the sagacious Colbert, John de Witt was 'a person well versed in the government of his country; but, although he had a number of good qualities, which were lauded even by his enemies, he also possessed this fault, that he placed his own private interest above that of the State.'[2] This was the man who, during the most critical period in the history of the Dutch, was called upon by the burgher party in power to direct the fortunes of the United Provinces in the interest of the oligarchs.

Formerly the stadtholder had counterbalanced to some extent the great preponderance of the province of Holland in the States-General. Therefore, it was only natural that the rulers of that province were passionately opposed to the re-establishment of the stadtholdership, and wished to abolish it, while the other provinces equally naturally wished for the appointment of a

[1] *Historisch Verhael van de Witt*, 1677, 3.
[2] Colbert, *Political Testament*, 1749, 249.

stadtholder.[1] Consequently, when the war with England was drawing to a close, the oligarchs of the province of Holland pursued a twofold political aim. First and principally, they strove to prevent the nomination of a stadtholder in order to preserve and increase their political preponderance in the commonwealth; secondly, they wished to make peace because the business of Holland suffered terribly, and because the masses of the people, who were supporters of the House of Orange, became unmanageable and dangerous.

Party government, especially in ill-organised States, means, as a rule, government not by fair and open means but by intrigue. 'As the best advice as well as the worst may be misrepresented by the opposition, it is necessary in a democracy for him who advises the best measures and for him who advises the worst to seduce the people with art and to disguise the truth in order to prevail. These jugglings withdraw the attention of the public from the point at issue, and they deprive the State of the advice of the ablest experts, but this disadvantage cannot be avoided. As plain and open methods are impossible, artifice must clear the way for action.'[2]

We have seen in the preceding chapter that the province of Holland entered upon peace negotiations with England behind the back of the other provinces, violating thereby the Union of Utrecht. This step might perhaps be justified by the great distress which the war was causing. But no justification can be pleaded for John de Witt, who, eager to strengthen the position of the party of disintegration by weakening that of national union, by a diabolical intrigue caused Cromwell to make the permanent exclusion of the House of Orange from office in the Netherlands a condition of the peace. Many years after the conclusion of peace, Charles II. declared to the French Ambassador that he was in possession of letters, which had been discovered by Secretary Thurloe, whereby he could prove that de Witt had done all he could do to inflame Cromwell against the House of Orange.[3] Charles II. was the uncle of the infant son of William II. of Orange, against whom de Witt's intrigue had

[1] Cerisier, *Histoire des Provinces Unies*, vol. vi. 595.*

[2] Speech of Diodotus, Thucydides, book iii.

[3] D'Estrades, *Lettres*, 1715, ii. 126.**

been directed, and if he possessed any sense of dignity and any feeling for his sister and her helpless little child, de Witt's action could not fail to fill the King of England with contempt and hatred for the leading statesman of Holland and his party, and to recoil upon the Netherlands.

When the Anglo-Dutch treaty had to be ratified, it became necessary to make known the existence of the secret article relating to the House of Orange which till then de Witt had kept an inviolable secret, and he acquainted the deputies of it in conspirator fashion. Before communicating that article to the States of Holland, he administered to all the deputies an oath, binding them not only to keep secret the proposition which he was about to make, but also the fact that an oath of secrecy had been exacted. This being done, he acquainted the States with the separate article concluded without their knowledge by their minister in London. This revelation caused an enormous sensation. The determined opposition of the supporters of the House of Orange, who were taken by surprise and who demanded that the secret article should be annulled, was unsuccessful. The party of national union was defeated by De Witt's cunning preparations, and by a majority of votes it was resolved that 'His Highness the Protector of England, having represented to the Ambassadors of the Republic in several conferences, that in order to render the peace sure and lasting between the two nations, it was necessary to ease him of the fear he was under that if the principal employments of the State were conferred on the Prince of Orange, the alliance of that prince with the family of the Stuarts would occasion misunderstandings and jealousies that might plunge the two nations into a fresh war; therefore, in order to secure the peace, and satisfy his Highness, the High and Mighty Lords, the States of Holland, promise never to choose the Prince of Holland, nor any of his descendants, for their governor or admiral: and that this province will never suffer any of her members to give their vote for making the Prince captain-general of the republic.' In that manner the victorious Cromwell, who had swept the Dutch from the sea, was 'eased of the fear' under which he was of an infant of four years.

In sending the ratification to London, de Witt carried his dissimulation so far as to conjure the Dutch Ambassadors to

take all possible steps with Cromwell in order to induce him to abandon his demand of having the Prince of Orange excluded. 'You cannot do the province a greater service,' wrote he to van Beverning and Nieuport, 'than to find an expedient to prevent the delivery of the article of exclusion which has been obtained with the utmost difficulty, and to which the States would never have consented but for the sake of avoiding the dire calamities of war.' [1]

To the ruling politicians of the party of disintegration, the defeat of the Netherlands by Cromwell was a godsend, for it had destroyed the power of the House of Orange, and had made the supremacy of the politicians absolute and permanent.

The remonstrances of the other provinces and of the party of union against the exclusion of the House of Orange were in vain. Although, according to the Union of Utrecht, a constitutional change required the unanimity of the provinces, the protests of the smaller provinces were disregarded by the province of Holland. The masses of the Dutch people, who had been disfranchised by the oligarchs, had always been staunch supporters of the House of Orange; they were enraged at the act of exclusion aimed at their beloved infant Prince, but they were powerless to oppose the machinations of de Witt and his party, and popular riots which occurred in consequence were suppressed by the politicians in power.

In order to allay the widespread dissatisfaction in the Netherland, de Witt issued a State paper, in which he tried to justify the exclusion of the House of Orange, and in which he expounded his view of the constitution and the fundamental maxims of the republic. On July 25, 1654, he issued this paper, the famous 'Deductie,' which is exceedingly interesting and important, because it contains the most authoritative exposition of the policy and the views of the party of disintegration. In chapters ii., iii. and iv. of the first part de Witt tried to prove that the province of Holland was entitled to exclude the House of Orange from all offices, and that that step was not contrary to the Union of Utrecht. In chapters v.–xi. de Witt asserts that the individual provinces are entitled to treat separately with foreign Powers, that they need not acquaint their allies with their

[1] Basnage, *Annales*, 1726, i. 239.*

private negotiations, and that consequently Holland was justified, and acted constitutionally, in privately negotiating the Exclusion Act with Cromwell. The second part of the 'Deductie' is devoted to an exposure and condemnation of national and administrative unity, by means of a national organisation and government; to an exposition of the dangers connected with the existence of a chief of State; to an attack upon the stadtholderate, and to the praise of a free republic ruled by party politicians and possessing no executive head. In chapter iii. of the second part we are told that 'the divisions in the Netherlands were caused not by the party politicians, but by the rulers of the country.' This assertion is contrary to historical fact. In chapter iv. we learn that, 'but for the Act of Exclusion, the Anglo-Dutch War would have continued.' This assertion also is contradictory to historical fact and to truth. In chapter v. it is asserted that 'the exclusion is harmful to none, but beneficial to all; because in a free commonwealth high office should be given to the worthiest.' Competition among the politicians for the highest offices of the State causes not 'the worthiest' but the best orators and most unscrupulous intriguers to obtain those administrative and executive offices which require not the gift of the tongue but expert knowledge. The history of the de Witt régime will show that in the free Dutch commonwealth—which was free only in so far as the party politicians were free to do what they liked—not the worthiest but the unworthiest were appointed to high position. In chapter vi. we learn that 'the Netherlands owe no gratitude to the House of Orange, but the House of Orange owes gratitude to the Netherlands.' Apparently the Netherlands delivered the House of Orange from the Spanish yoke, not the House of Orange the Netherlands.

If we carefully analyse de Witt's Mémoire, which covers more than a hundred pages, we find that it contains only two arguments. De Witt maintains, first, that Holland's action in making a separate peace with Cromwell, and in altering the constitution, was legal; secondly, that the abolition of the stadholderate, the only national central authority, was beneficial. A glance at the Treaty of Union of Utrecht given on pages 99 to 102 of this book will show that Holland's action was certainly illegal, and the history of the Netherlands after the abolition of the

stadtholderate will show that the destruction of the national central authority, far from being beneficial, ruined the country.

The two arguments that Holland's proceeding in excluding the House of Orange and altering the constitution was legal, and that the absence of a stadtholder was beneficial, were unsound and ridiculous. Therefore, they were carefully hidden by de Witt, the lawyer, in a hundred pages of irrelevant but plausible statements, devised to deceive the superficial reader. In the course of his pamphlet, de Witt tells us, for instance, that 'all republics which have given the command of their armies to one man have lost their liberty' (Part II. i. x). This assertion is absurd. He tells us, 'Chiefs of State are as a rule guided by their personal interests, which usually are opposed to the interests of the State. Hence, conflicts arise between the ambitious chief of State and the local authorities, who rely on their conscience, who strive to further the common weal, who hold that the welfare of the people is the highest law, and who are therefore compelled to oppose the chief of State to the utmost of their power' (part II. iii. vi). This was the state of affairs in the Netherlands, but the conflict between the national and local authorities arose not from the anti-national ambitions of the stadtholders, but from the selfish and anti-national ambitions of the party politicians.

After bestowing the most extravagant praise upon the organisation and government of the United Provinces in their state of disorganisation, and asserting that it is almost impossible to tear them asunder, de Witt demonstrates their solidarity by exclaiming, 'Have they not a constantly-sitting assembly of ambassadors, the States-General, through whom all the business of war by sea or land is managed by common consent, by whom alliances and confederations are made with kings, republics, princes and potentates? Have the States-General not common subordinate boards to manage all maritime affairs and their common conquests? And, above all, are not their hearts and souls united and bound together by the spiritual bond of the same religion? These are, according to the judgment of Their Noble Great Mightinesses, the true bonds of union . . . and that union will rest more securely and more firmly on assemblies and boards which never die, than on the external pomp and authority of mortal men. Besides, liberty and freedom are more

secure in the keeping of many good men to whom originally and according to the privileges of the land their preservation was entrusted than in the hands of one person on whom the same good men at all times have kept, and still must keep, a watchful eye.'[1]

The tone in which the foregoing State paper is written is characteristic and interesting. In it the party politicians claim for themselves all the virtues, and attribute to national authorities and to a chief of State all the vices. Self-praise and self-advertisement and the defamation of one's opponents, regardless of modesty, decency, and truth, are apparently inseparable from the party politician's activity. *Audacter calumniare, semper aliquid hæret*—traduce with boldness, something will always be believed—has at all times been his motto.

As the politicians were determined not to give up to the nation any part of their usurped authority, they were hostile to national unity, hostile to the creation of a comprehensive national organisation, and hostile to a supreme national authority. They hypocritically advocated a 'union of hearts and souls,' and a 'spiritual bond of union,' as may be seen from the foregoing extract, when a business organisation for business purposes was imperatively needed. The same men whose policy was the pursuit of individual profit, and who shrank neither from intrigue nor violence in pursuing their own advantage and aggrandisement and that of their party, had the hardihood to pose as soulful idealists when opposing the creation of a national organisation which was desired by the people, but which would have put limits to their own ambitions and deprived them of part of their dishonestly gained preponderance.

On July 25, 1654, the politicians proclaimed in the State paper cited in the foregoing that their motive in destroying the feeble national organisation was a pure and high-minded one, that they worked for the ideals of republican freedom and of civil liberty. On June 31, six days after the 'Deductie' was issued, the same high-minded political idealists issued another State paper, which contained an abstract of all the payments which the House of Orange had received between 1586 and 1650.

[1] *Résolutions importantes*, 1725, 40–150**; Aitzema, *Saken van Staet*, 1669, vol. iii. 943–976.**

From this account, which covers twelve pages, it appears that the House of Orange received 19,699,058 florins in the course of sixty-five years,[1] and it was no doubt issued in order to show to the taxpayers that the Princes of Orange had been the vampires of the Netherlands, of which the oligarchs had patriotically freed the country; that the payments to the princes of Orange were responsible for the high national taxation and for the existence of the national debt. Juggling with figures is easy. 19,699,058 florins seemed an enormous sum to the taxpayers, who probably did not divide that sum by 65. The sum of 300,000 florins paid per annum to the stadtholder was small, especially when we remember the wealth of the Netherlands and the invaluable 'services rendered' by the House of Orange. The princes of the House of Orange had given their lives and their goods for the Netherlands, as we have seen in this book, and they had rescued the country, almost against its will, from the tyranny of the Spaniards. They had during those sixty-five years defended the Netherlands, and had raised them to the rank of a leading Great Power. These facts were not mentioned in the account of the payments made to them, which was devised to deceive the Dutch traders and to gain their support by an appeal to their cupidity.

While the oligarchs of Holland thus strove to dishonour and defame the memory and the deeds of the princes of Orange, they strove to increase their own prestige by conferring places, honours and high-sounding titles upon themselves. For instance, on June 18, 1654, a month before the 'Deductie' was issued, the clergy of Holland and West Friesland were ordered 'to impress upon their flocks in public sermons and in private conversation that subjects owe respect and obedience to their legitimate sovereigns, and that all that is resolved by the States of Holland and West Friesland, whom Almighty God has created their legitimate sovereigns, is for the good of the country and for the advantage of the people.'[2] On December 16 of the same year the clergy were again ordered 'that all ministers of the Gospel must teach their flocks that it is their duty to believe that the States of Holland and West Friesland, their High and Sovereign Lords, are established by God, that all they resolve and decree

[1] *Résolutions importantes*, 1725, 330.**

[2] *Ibid.* 39.**

is for the good of the country and of the people, and that it is the duty of the people immediately to obey.'[1] These blasphemous decrees illustrate the spirit of tyrannical absolutism with which the oligarchs ruled the country and disregarded the nominally sovereign people. The people were forbidden to pray for the Prince of Orange, as they had done hitherto, but were ordered to pray for their Sovereign Lords the States. On November 30, 1656, the oligarchs decreed themselves most magnificent titles by which alone they were in future to be addressed. In Dutch they were to be addressed, 'To the Noble, High and Mighty Lords, the Lords States of Holland and West Friesland.' In Latin they were to be addressed, 'To the most illustrious great and powerful Lords, the Lords of Holland and West Friesland.'[2] Innumerable examples of similar inanities could be given with which their 'High Mightinesses' spent their time when the Netherlands were surrounded by enemies, when the Dutch army, navy, and civil administration cried for reform, when not a moment was to be lost to preserve the country from a second disastrous defeat.

After peace had been concluded, the politicians of Holland, true to their traditions, resumed the pursuit of a utilitarian policy, a policy profitable to the mercantile class to which they themselves belonged. They reduced the interest of the State debt from 5 per cent. to 4 per cent., reduced taxation and promoted the trade of the country in every way. Consequently prosperity soon returned to the Netherlands.

Concentrating all their efforts upon the development of trade and industries, the politicians of Holland gave little thought to the armed strength of the country. The disastrous war with England was forgotten. In 1662 an anonymous book, entitled 'The Interest of Holland, or the Causes of Holland's Welfare,' appeared. It was written by P. de la Court, apparently at the direction of John de Witt, who contributed two chapters to it, and is a most interesting historical document, because the views of the leading politicians on the state and policy of the Netherlands, and especially of the province of Holland, are embodied therein.

'The Interest of Holland' was written in order to prove that

[1] *Résolutions importantes*, 1725, 373.** [2] *Ibid.* 462.**

the province of Holland was, and ever would be, the richest and the most powerful country in the world. In chapters vii., xi. and xiii. we learn 'that in Europe there is no country fitter for traffic than Holland'; 'that fishing and traffic must entirely settle in Holland, and manufacture must do the like for the most part, and consequently navigation or sailing upon freight'; 'that Amsterdam is provided with better means of subsistence, and is a greater city of traffic, and that Holland is a richer merchandising country, than ever was in the world'; 'that the Hollanders, having beaten well-nigh all nations by traffic out of the Mediterranean, the Indian and Baltic Seas, are the great and indeed the only carriers of goods throughout the world,' &c.

Since the Navigation Laws had come into force, the trade of England had mightily increased at the cost of the Dutch traders, and many patriotic Dutchmen looked with alarm at the threatening military and commercial progress of England. It was the object of 'The Interest of Holland' to bolster up the overbearing attitude of the province of Holland, to silence the patriotic party, the party of national union, and to prove that everything was for the best in the best of all possible republics governed by the best of all possible governments. Therefore those who with anxiety looked into the future were somewhat illogically bidden to take comfort by looking to the past. 'As for England, that country heretofore wholly subsisted by a husbandry, and was wont to be naked of any naval power' (chapter ix.). Having proved that the Netherlands had been, and therefore always would be, the first commercial and maritime country in the world, a conclusion which is hardly logical, the book went on to prove that the destruction of the national organisation and the abolition of the stadtholderate had greatly increased the political and military power of the country. In Part II. chapter xi. we learn that 'Holland when under the government of a single person was in continual tumults and broils, and that under a free government it can defend itself against all foreign Powers better than heretofore'; chapter xiii. proves that 'Holland having a free government is very well able to resist all foreign Powers'; chapter xiv. establishes that 'Holland, though she does not fortify her cities, if she keeps united with Utrecht only, is able to defend herself single-handed against all the mighty potentates

of the world'; chapter xx. proclaims that 'every great city in Holland, whether it be well or ill fortified, is able to defend itself single-handed against all forces from without' Further, we are informed 'the frontiers of the country are almost everywhere by means of the sea and rivers, so easily fortified and occupied that Holland, by merely standing on the defensive, would certainly be able to fight all foreign Powers that should attack it. . . . And Holland, taking due care of things, is so powerful as not to be conquered by any, except perhaps by England, if that nation be willing to ruin itself.'[1] Truly 'Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.'

Part III. of 'The Interest of Holland' is entirely devoted to the condemnation of the old form of government and to the praise of rule without a stadtholder, and the book ends with the words, 'If the republic of Holland should be deprived of its free government by the nomination of a stadtholder or captain-General, it would in a few years lose both the name and appearance of a free republic, it would be changed into a monarchy, the merchants would leave the country in order to live under a free government, and Holland would become a land desolate and uninhabited, a body without a soul, and a place of unspeakable misery.'[2]

The politicians of Holland followed the sorry policy of make-believe and of deliberate misrepresentation and deception. The people of Holland were told that the economic and military position of their province, unaided by the other provinces, was absolutely secure, not because the politicians believed it, but because they wished the people to believe it; because they wished to lull the electors into security; because they wished to counteract the effect of the warnings of the patriotic party of national union, who foresaw and foretold the great dangers to which their country was exposed through the rule of the party politicians and through Holland's selfishness. While the Dutch were thus systematically deceived by their political leaders about the real state of their country, foreign nations clearly recognised that the Netherlands were rapidly decaying through the lack of a national administrative organisation, and the lack of a national,

[1] De Witt, *True Interest*, 1702, 232, 241.*

[2] De Witt, *Political Maxims*, 1743, 415.*

as distinguished from a party, government. On September 9, 1655, Ambassador Chanut wrote to Cardinal Mazarin, 'At present there is not a single person in this State with whom one can treat in confidence, and who has sufficient influence to enable one to hope that the smallest affair may be carried through. The divisions and the jealousy shown to all authority are apparent in the towns, in the provinces, and in the State. Nobody thinks seriously and with providence of the future and of the welfare of the whole State. Spontaneously and without logic they pursue a patchwork policy, and, by endeavouring to remedy only the most pressing evils, reduce everything to the greatest confusion. There is no unity, no prudence, no authority, and no secrecy in the council of the provinces.' M. de Brienne wrote on March 4, 1660, from The Hague, 'You know what is a democratic republic in which there are more than 2,000 people who have a share in the government, a republic without a chief, and which is filled with intriguers and with men without a conscience. This being the constitution of the State, it is only natural that a clock which has so many wheels and springs is often out of order and does not always go with regularity.' [1]

Notwithstanding the fulsome self-praise of the ruling politicians, opposition to their rule was rapidly growing in the Netherlands. In 1664 Ambassador d'Estrades wrote to Louis XIV.: 'The majority of the towns of Holland are becoming tired of the great power wielded by de Witt, who puts his relatives and personal friends into the magistracies, and into the highest administrative positions. He knows quite well that that is the only means he has of preserving his authority, and of continuing to rule, and he will do all he can do in order to accomplish that end.' [2]

The foreign policy of the Dutch was a purely commercial one. 'It is in the interest of the State, not only to be at peace with all other States and potentates, but that all States and potentates should be at peace among themselves; for every political trouble and every war is disadvantageous to the republic.' [3] 'On account of our extensive commerce and shipping, universal peace is necessary to us. Experience teaches us that we suffer more than any

[1] *Archives d'Orange*, série ii. vol. v. 30.** [2] *Ibid.* 33.**
[3] De Witt, *Lettres*, 1725, vol. i. 80.**

other nation if there is war anywhere.' [1] 'As our trade is universal, peace, universal peace is our watchword.' [2]

Striving after universal peace in order to enable the Dutch merchants to monopolise the trade of the world, the Netherlands concluded treaties of friendship and alliance with all other nations. In 1662, a treaty of alliance for mutual defence was concluded between the Netherlands and France, and another one between the Netherlands and England, through the activity of de Witt.[3] The former alliance was concluded for twenty-five years, the latter was to last for ever. Having concluded treaties of friendship and alliance with practically all countries, the position of the Netherlands appeared to be more secure than it had ever been in the past.[4] All the world being allied to the Dutch, no enemy remained.

'Treaties of alliance are only the expression of a community of aims and of risks run by the treaty-concluding Powers.' [5]

Everybody's friend is nobody's friend. To be everybody's ally means to be nobody's ally. A universal alliance is objectless, and an alliance between national competitors is ridiculous. England strove to conquer the wealth of the Dutch by force, following the policy which Cromwell had initiated; France, guided by Colbert, endeavoured to capture it by the most comprehensive and the most destructive fiscal measures ever devised. Under these circumstances, the alliances of the Dutch with England and France were not worth the parchment they were written on; for, in the words of a Dutch ambassador, a contemporary of de Witt, 'parchment and wax do not bind faster than does a chain of straw.' [6] They were make-believe treaties, and they were probably entered upon by the Dutch statesmen merely in order to throw dust in the eyes of their supporters and to earn for them the cheap applause of the easily deceivable masses.

Cromwell died in September 1658, and Charles II. was restored to the throne of Great Britain in 1660. His sister had married William II. of Orange. Therefore Charles II. was

[1] De Witt, *Lettres*, 1725, vol. i. 285.** [2] *Ibid.* 290.**
[3] Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book xlix. chaps. vii. x.*
[4] Neuville, *Histoire de la Hollande*, 1703, vol. iii. 113.*
[5] Bismarck, Speech, February 6, 1888.
[6] Wicquefort, *Embassador*, 1716, 372.

the uncle of William's little son, who had been born a week after William's sudden death in 1650. Had the States of Holland been sincere in their assertion that the Act excluding the House of Orange from all offices in the Netherlands was extorted from them by Cromwell against their will,[1] they would have hastened to repeal the resolution taken in prejudice of the young Prince. The King of England desired the Act of Exclusion to be abrogated, but De Witt now threw off the mask and openly opposed the wishes of Charles II., regardless of the risks to which that opposition exposed his country. In 1663, Charles II. wrote a letter to the States of Holland and asked them to look after the education of his nephew the young Prince of Orange, conjointly with the Princess-Dowager.[2] De Witt was extremely disconcerted by this letter, and he told M. d'Estrades, the French ambassador, that he could not comply with the wish of the King, fearing that the Prince might acquire too much power, especially as the people loved him extremely.[3] The Pensioner took care to inspire the States of Holland with his own sentiments, and accordingly their answer to King Charles's letter was dry and formal. They distinguished between the Prince's person and his estate, and promised to take a great deal of care of his lands, but declared at the same time that the constitution of the republic would not allow them to go any further.[4] The States of Holland could not have expressed more effectually their hatred of the stadtholdership and of the youthful Prince of Orange, who then was a boy of thirteen years, than by refusing to superintend his education.

'If you will study history you will find that freedom, when it has been destroyed, has always been destroyed by those who shelter themselves under the cover of its forms, and who speak its language with unparalleled eloquence and vigour.'[5] 'The most cruel tyranny is that which is exercised under the shadow of the laws, and with the outward appearance of justice.'[6]

[1] See page 297.
[2] Aitzema, *Saken van Staet*, 1669, vol. iv. 1111 ff.
[3] Basnage, *Annales*, 1726, vol. i. 681.*
[4] Letter of the States of Holland to Charles II., April 27, 1663.
[5] Lord Salisbury, Speech, October 1, 1884.
[6] Montesquieu, *Grandeur et Décadence*, chap. xiv.

CHAPTER XVI

ENVIOUS OF THE CONTINUED PROSPERITY OF THE DUTCH, ENGLAND ATTACKS THE NETHERLANDS A SECOND TIME AND THE DUTCH LOSE MUCH TRADE, THEIR MARITIME SUPREMACY AND THEIR NORTH AMERICAN COLONIES TO ENGLAND

'The desire of wealth and possessions is the principal cause of all wars.'—TACITUS, *Historiæ*, book iv.

'Wars are made with iron, not with gold; with men, not with walls.'—QUINTUS CURTIUS, *Historia*, book v.

'It has always been, and always ought to be, the main end and design of those who wage war to enrich themselves and to impoverish their adversaries, for the only reasonable motive for war and conquest is the aggrandisement of our own nation and the weakening of our opponents.'—MACHIAVELLI, *History of Florence*, book vi.

'Democracies honour those who by delusive eloquence govern the multitude, but monarchies those who are most capable in managing the affairs of the nation. Monarchies surpass democratic governments not only in the ordinary routine of administration, but especially in war, for monarchies are more able than are democracies to raise troops, to use them to advantage, to arm in secret, to make military demonstrations, to win over some neighbours, and to overawe others.'—ISOCRATES, *Third Oration*.

COMMERCE and trade have ever been the most fruitful causes of war, for wealth begets envy, envy begets hatred, and hatred begets war. Both England and the Netherlands strove after commercial and maritime supremacy, and therefore they were by nature pitted against each other. By defeating the Dutch, England could 'enrich herself and impoverish her adversaries.' The first Anglo-Dutch war had been a war for commercial and maritime supremacy, but it had not decided matters. The object in dispute had not been gained. England had not obtained the maritime position for which she had fought. A second Anglo-Dutch war, a war which was to decide whether commercial and maritime supremacy should fall to England or definitively remain

with the Netherlands, was, in view of England's ambitions, as unavoidable and as necessary as was the second Punic War and the second war between Venice and Genoa.

After the war with Cromwell, the maritime power and trade of Holland had again most vigorously expanded, and the wealth of the Netherlands had rapidly increased. In 1659 money was freely loaned there at 3 or 4 per cent., and it was not uncommon for men to borrow money at these rates, and, taking it to England, put it out at 6 or 8 per cent.[1] The old commercial jealousy allied with the consciousness that England need only make use of her natural supremacy to crush her inconvenient neighbour was driving her into war.[2] In the words of a contemporary writer, 'England having the same aims and ambitions as the Netherlands, could not endure to see the trade of the sea engrossed in the hands of these Hollanders.'[3] Public opinion in England was very hostile to the Dutch, whose wealth aroused the envy, and whose weakness provoked the contempt, of the people. Numerous pamphlets increased the hatred of the English people against the Dutch, and urged a war of spoliation. Public opinion in England under Charles II. was coloured throughout by mercantile ambition.[4]

The English observed the progress of Dutch commerce with envy. They were indignant at seeing themselves supplanted everywhere in the world's markets, notwithstanding their exertions, especially as they knew that England was superior to the Netherlands by her natural resources, her geographical position, configuration, climate, fertility, and the number of her population. They might have tried to defeat their Dutch rivals with their own weapons, industry and thrift, but these means seemed too slow to their national impatience and impetuousness. They thought it easier and quicker to gain the commerce of the Dutch by force than to obtain it by competition. These were the views among the mercantile classes.[5]

[1] Douglas Campbell, *The Puritan in Holland, England and America*, 1892, vol. i. 336.

[2] Ranke, *History of England*, vol. iii. 417.

[3] Parival, *History of This Iron Age*, 1659, 277.

[4] Hertz, *English Public Opinion after the Restoration*, 1902

[5] Cerisier, *Histoire des Provinces Unies*, vol. vii. 3.*

During the ten years which followed the passing of the Navigation Act of 1651, the English Legislature had become convinced of its efficacy, and was prepared to render its provisions even more stringent. If Charles II. could have reversed Cromwell's legislative measure with advantage or popularity, he and his Court would, from hatred of Cromwell, have gladly taken such a step. But Charles and his ministers perceived the advantages which had already accrued from the Navigation Act, and in the first year of his reign a further Navigation Act (12 Charles II.), being dated from the death of Charles I., was passed which made that of Cromwell more restrictive.[1] So jealous was England of the naval and commercial greatness of the Dutch, that she did not hesitate to proscribe all trade with them, placing the Netherlands virtually without the pale of the commercial world.[2] The colonies were compelled to buy English manufactures, and England succeeded in greatly damaging Holland's trade and industry.[3]

Charles II., like Cromwell, meant to fight the Dutch, not merely by legislative enactments. Charles II. loved the French and hated the Dutch nation. His love of France was due to his natural gaiety, to the remembrance of the happy hours he spent in that country, and to his partiality for the French constitution. The manners of the people of Holland were opposed to his own, and the form of their government, similar to that which had nearly destroyed monarchy in England, repelled him. He and his brother, the Duke of York, strongly favoured Roman Catholicism, and they saw in the Netherlands not only the stronghold of Protestantism, but also the hotbed of those ideas of political and religious liberty which had led to the execution of Charles I. The affronts which the Dutch had heaped upon his youthful nephew the Prince of Orange, and the high tone which they assumed towards himself, hurt the King's pride. He envied Cromwell for having humbled the then masters of the ocean. Necessitous through the parsimony of Parliament, he hoped to supply his monetary wants by the plunder of those people who at that time possessed most of the wealth of Europe, and at the

[1] Lindsay, *History of Merchant Shipping*, vol. ii. 442.

[2] MacCulloch, *Commercial Dictionary*, art. 'Navigation Laws.'

[3] Laspeyres, *Volkswirtschaftliche Anschauungen*, 1863, 126.*

same time to make himself popular by a profitable war which would raise the English trade upon the ruins of Dutch commerce.[1] The Court also was 'mad' for a Dutch war.[2]

The King, the Court, the mercantile interests, and the people were eager to attack the Dutch, and as there was no just cause for war, a cause had to be created. By unrelenting attacks upon their colonies and shipping, the Dutch were to be provoked into hostilities. In the year 1661, Sir Robert Holmes began to attack and plunder the Dutch settlements on the African coast, and to capture Dutch shipping. In 1664 his attacks in that part of the world became more and more vigorous, and in August of that year he sailed across the Atlantic to North America, and took possession of New Amsterdam (now called New York) and of the Dutch North American colonies.[3] When on August 28, 1664, the English demanded the surrender of New Netherland, the burgomasters were willing to surrender. The stormy old governor exhorted them to rouse themselves in action and to fight, but his entreaties and threats were in vain.[4] The patriotism of the Dutch had disappeared. Their flag was to them an ornamental piece of cloth without commercial value. Therefore they did not mind changing it.

The attacks of England became unbearable. In November 1664, the English fleet, under the Duke of York as high admiral, intercepted the Dutch Bordeaux fleet of merchantmen homeward bound and laden with wine and brandy, and 130 Dutch ships were brought into England and condemned as lawful prizes, although war had not yet been proclaimed. 'The law of nations was never more unjustly and more manifestly violated.'[5] In December 1664 Sir Thomas Allen attacked with seven ships of war the precious Smyrna fleet of the Dutch before Cadiz.[6] Only in February 1665, after all these outrages had been perpetrated, was the formal declaration of war issued. The war was undoubtedly popular in England. The instinct of the people found

[1] Sir John Dalrymple, *Memoirs*, 1790, i. 36.*
[2] *Pepys's Diary*, Jan. and Feb. 1664.
[3] Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book l. chap. iv.*
[4] Ridpath, *History of United States*, chap. xv.
[5] Rapin, *History of England*, 1732, vol. ii. 137.
[6] Brandt, *Vie de de Ruyter*, 1698, 278.*

expression by the lips of Monk, who is reported to have said, 'What matters this or that reason?'[1]

While England in beginning the war relied on might—the law of the stronger—the Dutch placed their trust upon the law of morality, upon right, which undoubtedly was on their side. Therefore they replied to England's attacks with negotiations carried on in a spirit of moderation and conciliation, although they might have known from the history of their own conquests that might, not right, is the sole title by which nations are created and by which they hold their territories. Wishing to rely on right, the Dutch endeavoured to convince the world of the justice of their cause, and to enlist the active sympathy of foreign Powers by a relation of the wrongs which the English had done to them. On September 1, 1664, Arlington, the English Secretary of State, wrote to his ambassador in Spain: 'The Dutch do all they can do to possess the world of the justice of their cause against us.' These complaints and appeals were, of course, perfectly useless, because self-interest, not sentiment, directs the policy of nations and causes them to help those who are attacked. Besides, in matters political and military no one helps those who do not help themselves, and feeble and foolish nations are left to their fate. To answer blows with blue-books is ridiculous, and is usually an unmistakable proof of weakness. History shows that the 'tribunal of Europe' sides with successful might, not with ill-treated right. Both the moderate and the energetic remonstrances of the States fell on deaf ears. Moral fortitude breaks no bones. The greater the desire evinced by the Dutch to preserve the peace, the stronger became the desire of the English to break it.

Charles II. gave orders that as large a quantity of naval stores as possible should be bought in the Netherlands, so as to denude the country of naval supplies and to disarm it before the actual declaration of war, which was purposely delayed as long as possible.[2] The Netherlands followed a utilitarian policy. The merchant statesmen, championing individualism, non-interference, and free trade, did not interfere if the citizens traded with the enemy, especially as they set the example in these nefarious

[1] Mahan, *Sea Power*, 1890, 107.

[2] Neuville, *Histoire de la Hollande*, 1703, vol. iii. 132.*

transactions. The Dutch merchants were only interested in buying in the cheapest and selling in the dearest market. Consequently they habitually supplied the enemy with war material,[1] and they acted in their traditional manner by providing England with the weapons of war.

When the Dutch saw that England was determined upon war, they asked their numerous friends and allies, and especially France, to support them. They received much good advice from all, but assistance from none. The French held aloof, pleased to see the Dutch and English destroy one another. Before the war France had made mischief between England and the Netherlands in order to ruin the navies of both and thus to be able to conquer the Spanish Netherlands with ease.[2] It was Louis XIV.'s intention to weaken both England and the Netherlands in accordance with the policy of conquest planned by Lionne. France did not mean to interfere and to aid the Dutch on the sea against the English. Therefore the French fleet took good care not to join the Dutch fleet in time for action.[3]

Alliances are the expression of common interests and aims, and the binding power of treaties lies not in their wording and the signatures and seals affixed to them, but in the 'community of fear,' in the common interests actually threatened. A Dutch ambassador, a contemporary of de Witt, wrote: 'Princes make no treaties but with this tacit condition, that they will observe them no longer than they can do so without prejudicing their own interests, their intention being to extract all the profit thereof, and to leave to their companion all the inconveniences and all the danger, if they can.' This is not unnatural, for 'Princes have an obligation to their subjects which is beyond comparison much stronger than the obligation incurred by any alliance, how strict soever its terms may be.' Therefore 'Princes observe treaties only as far as they please, and it is self-interest or whim, but not honesty and principle, which guide their action.'[4]

Frederick the Great said on the same subject:—

'If the ruler is obliged to sacrifice his own person for the welfare of his subjects, he is all the more obliged to sacrifice

[1] See page 190. [2] Pufendorf, *Histoire Générale*, 1721, vol. i. 401.
[3] Ammann et Coutant, *Histoire de France*, 1884, 318.
[4] Wicquefort, *Embassador*, 1716, 371, 372.

engagements, the continuation of which would be harmful to his country. Examples of broken treaties are frequent. . . .

'It is clear to me that a private person must scrupulously keep his word even if he has given it rashly. If he fails to do so, the law will be put into motion, and after all only an individual suffers. But to what tribunal can a sovereign appeal if another breaks his engagements? The word of a private man involves but an individual, that of a sovereign may mean misery for whole nations. Therefore the problem may be summed up thus: Is it better that a nation should perish or that a sovereign should break his treaty? Who would be so imbecile as to hesitate how to decide?'[1]

Treaty obligations may be evaded either by declaring, 'Circumstances have changed since we have signed the treaty,' for the clause *rebus sic stantibus* is tacitly understood to apply to all treaties which require performance; or by telling the ally 'we would like, but we are not able, to help you,' pleading the principle, '*Ultra posse nemo obligatur*,' for no promise is binding where the performance is impossible—no great nation need sacrifice its existence on the altar of treaty fidelity, and the first duty of the statesman is that to his own country—or by the gentler way of procrastination, for no treaty clauses whatever can guarantee the degree of zeal or the amount of force that will be devoted to the discharge of obligations when the private interest of those who have made the treaty no longer reinforces the text at its earliest interpretation. National obligations under a treaty agreement differ from the civil obligations arising from a civil agreement in this, that the latter can be enforced by an appeal to the law, while the former can be enforced only by an appeal to a usually unsympathetic world or to the honour and conscience of the other party. Therefore, treaty obligations are rightly considered not absolute, but only moral, obligations which, like most moral obligations, possess a very uncertain binding force. A State should, and will, act morally only as long as the interest of the State is not gravely prejudiced, but no longer. Every government takes its own interests as the *standard* of its actions however much it may drape them with deductions of justice or of sentiment, and statesmen are appointed to their high position

[1] Frederick the Great, *Histoire de Mon Temps*, introduction.

not in order to be able to pose at the expense of their nation as models of moral rectitude on the stage of the world, but in order to protect and further the interests of their country; and as States are associations which are rather devoted to the furtherance of the material interests of the citizens than to the promotion of international morality, statesmen will never hesitate to break a treaty which is prejudicial to their nation. For these reasons the binding power of treaties has always been, and is still, exceedingly uncertain. Alliances are like crutches. They may be useful in certain contingencies, but a great State must be able to rely in the main on its own unaided strength or it will perish.[1]

When, after the outbreak of war with England, the Dutch requested the French to fulfil their treaty obligations, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs politely advised them to use patience and moderation and to come to an agreement with England. When urged to act in accordance with the treaty, he expressed distrust of the Dutch. 'If we break with England to-day, you may join with England to-morrow and attack us. You have made a bad policy, and you have shown us that you do not trust us.'[2] 'Do not worry us to help you immediately. We must choose our own time for action. Unless we feel satisfied about the political situation, we fear that the Netherlands, England, and Spain may conjointly attack us.'[3]

The Dutch had concluded alliances with many States, but their allies were only fair-weather allies. Some had never had any intention to assist the Dutch, others were gained over by their enemies. The amateur statesmen of the Netherlands were 'very astonished to see themselves abandoned by all their allies.'[4]

Deserted by their allies, and compelled to rely on their own unaided strength, the Dutch fitted out a fleet in feverish haste, but they were as ill prepared for war then as they had been in the first war with England. Again England could send out more and larger ships than that country which possessed the

[1] See Bismarck, *Gedanken und Erinnerungen*, chaps. viii. xxix.
[2] Ambassador van Beuningen to de Witt, Jan. 16, 1665.
[3] *Ibid.* Feb. 27, 1665.
[4] D'Estrades to Louis XIV., June 18, 1665.

trade of the world, and which was dependent on foreign food. In 1665, the English had 109 ships of the line, of which 34 carried from 50 to 100 guns, while the Dutch had only 103 ships of the line, of which 37 carried from 50 to 78 guns.[1] At the admiralties all was muddle and confusion. The magazines were empty, there were six lieutenant-admirals instead of one chief commander of the fleet, and the authority of these lieutenant-admirals was only a nominal one.[2] Pushful individual politicians and their relatives, friends and connections, managed and ruled the navy with an eye to their own benefit.

At the outbreak of the war with England, the supreme command was not given to an experienced admiral, but to Obdam van Wassenaer, an ex-colonel of cavalry, who in the war with Cromwell had been given the command of the fleet because he was a friend of de Witt, and was then considered politically a safe man.[3] When Obdam sailed to meet the English fleet, he encountered contrary winds, and returned to the Netherlands, but he was ordered by the politicians to attack the enemy at once and without regard to the wind. If he disobeyed he would lose his head. Daily despatch-boats were sent out to him to ask him whether he had attacked the enemy, and if not, why not.[4] When Obdam sighted the English fleet, he assembled a council of war, and all his officers were of opinion that an action should be fought only when the wind had changed, but Obdam showed them his written orders, told them that he shared their opinion, but that he preferred death in battle to death by the hangman, and ordered the attack.[5] The Dutch fleet was, of course, totally defeated. The first battle of the war, fought on June 14, 1665, was a terrible disaster. Four admirals and 7,000 men on the Dutch side were killed or made prisoners, and 18 ships were taken or destroyed, while the English lost only one ship and 600 men.

The defeat of the Dutch fleet was due solely to the bungling interference of the civilian party politicians, who should never be

[1] De Jonge, *Zeewezen*, 1858 ff.
[2] Geddes, *De Witt*, 1879, 352.
[3] See page 286.
[4] Comte de Guiche, *Mémoires*, 1744, vol. i. 105.*
[5] Neuville, *Histoire de la Hollande*, 1703, ii. 136.*

entrusted with the management and direction of naval or military affairs, of which they are ignorant. Not only were the Dutch ships inferior to the English ships and the Dutch guns inferior to the English guns, but the appointment of naval officers, not by merit but by patronage, in accordance with party-political requirements, had totally demoralised the service. Many captains were unfit to command, and fled without having come into touch with the enemy. Three captains were shot for cowardice, others were degraded and dismissed. Vice-Admiral van Tromp, the son of the celebrated Martin van Tromp, resigned his commission, and declared to the States that he would not serve again, as of all his captains only a dozen had done their duty.[1] The captains of the fleet, disgusted with the general muddle, which the rule of the politicians had caused, declared that they would not return to their ships except under the flag of the Prince of Orange.[2]

Obdam having been killed, it was necessary to appoint a new commander in chief. Vice-Admiral van Tromp, the worthy son of his great father, was the ablest naval officer available, and he was greatly loved by the sailors, but the politicians believed him to be too much attached to the interests of the Prince of Orange. They had offered the command of the fleet to a Dutch burgomaster and to a Danish vice-admiral, who refused it. Therefore they resolved to command the fleet themselves. John de Witt had himself, R. Huigens, deputy for Guelderland, a man seventy-eight years old, and J. Boreel, the burgomaster of Middelburg, appointed joint commanders of the fleet, with van Tromp as second in command. John de Witt, the organiser of disorganisation, made himself virtually commander-in-chief, partly from vanity, partly because he wished, as D'Estrades reported, 'to overcome the troubles arising from breaches of faith and intrigue, which are as prevalent in the fleet as they are in the council chamber.' De Witt had now the satisfaction of having the whole civil, military and naval government in his own hands. He told General comte de Guiche that the first naval battle of the war had been lost solely through Obdam's lack of judgment, that he himself would go on board the fleet, and that his presence would suffice to put matters right and to give fresh courage to the men. 'I could not help laughing at that uncommon piece of

[1] D'Estrades to Louis XIV., June 18, 1665. [2] *Ibid.* July 2, 1665.

presumption,' wrote de Guiche in his Memoirs.[1] During fifteen years of government without a stadtholder, naval efficiency and the bonds of naval discipline had been completely destroyed.

The Dutch masses were furious that the fleet had been so disgracefully defeated, and they blamed the politicians for the disaster. Riots against the governing politicians occurred everywhere, even in Amsterdam, the stronghold of the oligarchy. The people were convinced that the disaster was due to the fact that the nation was leaderless, and clamoured that the Prince of Orange should be placed at the head of the State. De Witt was 'very grieved' at these demonstrations of hostility to his rule and to that of his party, but he continued to govern the party against the will of the people. Loyal to his party, a traitor to his country, de Witt tenaciously clung to office, and he continued playing the party game for his own benefit and for that of his party until his country was in its death throes. The Netherlands had to be ruined, so that de Witt and his party might continue in power a little longer.

While the Dutch were fighting England on the sea, a petty German potentate, the bishop of Münster, suddenly invaded their territories with an armed rabble, about 20,000 strong. Previously to the bishop's attack, the Dutch had reduced their army, but when they began to fear an attack by land they hastily replaced the war-worn veterans, whom they had dismissed for the sake of economy, with worthless raw levies recruited from the slums. The hastily collected troops of the Dutch were a mob of armed loafers, not an army, and the French ambassador reported to the King of France, 'With all their new troops, the Dutch would not dare to meet 6,000 infantry and 2,000 cavalry of your Majesty's forces.'[2] This was good news to Louis XIV., who contemplated attacking at the earliest opportunity his 'très chers grands amis, alliés et confédérés,' as he styled them in his correspondence.

In September 1665, the bishop had declared war against the Netherlands, and before the middle of October his troops had overrun a considerable part of the United Provinces. The Dutch were unable to meet the bishop's troops. 'They have only a few

[1] Comte de Guiche, *Mémoires*, 1744, vol. i. 126.*

[2] D'Estrades to Louis XIV., March 12, 1665.

soldiers,' reported the French ambassador, 'and these are not fit to enter upon a campaign with the bishop.'[1] The Netherlands, which, seventeen years before, at the time of the Treaty of Münster, had possessed the finest army in the world, an army with which they had defeated the armies of Spain, were now unable to oppose an armed rabble. Of the celebrated Dutch army only the name and the uniforms were left.[2] France had to send troops to the Netherlands to protect them against the bishop, for the troops of Münster pillaged and devastated the country mercilessly, to the extreme terror of the inhabitants.

Even then, at a time of the most urgent national peril, the individual provinces and towns unhesitatingly placed their parochial and their monetary interests high above the national interests, and they were not ashamed of treating shabbily the French troops sent to their aid. D'Estrades complained, 'The Dutch Government give us resolutions instead of deeds. They have allowed eight sous per day to be charged for the feed of our troopers' horses, but the town of Arnheim has arbitrarily demanded thirteen sous from the men, although their whole pay amounts only to fifteen sous. Our troopers can consequently not live on their pay, and it is to be feared that they will desert. I shall immediately make representations to the States-General, but the evil is that every town is its own master, and is able to disregard the commands of the States.'[3]

The self-governing localities deliberately opposed every national defensive measure which was inconvenient to themselves. The deputies of the States-General were at Deventer, and ordered the town to be prepared for defence; but the authorities of that self-governing town neither allowed the trees on the counterscarp to be cut down nor the villas of the burgomasters and of their friends, which were in the line of fire, to be touched, and it was impossible to compel them to allow it.[4] Home Rule all round had created universal chaos.

The military experts had practically no influence whatever upon military affairs. By a resolution taken in 1625, which was

[1] D'Estrades to Louis XIV., Oct. 22, 1665.
[2] Comte de Guiche, *Mémoires*, 1744, vol. ii. 13.*
[3] D'Estrades to Louis XIV., Jan. 14, 1666.
[4] Comte de Guiche, *Mémoires*, 1744, vol. i. 210.*

always strictly observed, all military men and even the captain-general himself, were excluded from the deliberations of the States-General,[1] so that the military administration was exclusively in the hands of the ruling politicians, who could manage military affairs behind closed doors at their own will for the good of their party and without regard to efficiency and to the recommendations of military experts, exactly as is done now in England and the United States. In time of war, the commander-in-chief was accompanied by several civilian deputies, who were attended by life guards, and saluted with the colours, in order to show to the army that they, not the general, commanded the troops. The general who nominally commanded was not allowed to give battle, begin a siege, or take any step of importance without the 'advice and consent' of the politicians accompanying him.[2] Thus the military administration and the commander-in-chief were made absolutely subservient to the party politicians in power, to their party-political aims and to their lack of knowledge.

The Dutch army was no longer a national force, but a plaything in the hands of the party politicians, and the consequences of this state of affairs were bound to be disastrous. The French ambassador reported, 'The most distressing case of mismanagement is the command of the Dutch army. In view of the divided state of the provinces, it is impossible that any comprehensive plan can be executed. Five of the provinces want Prince John Maurice of Nassau to be the commander-in-chief, but Holland and Zeeland have proposed to appoint two other men to the command whom they believe more devoted to their interests; but at last Holland had to agree that the Prince should have the command, and he is going to Wesel. However, he is accompanied by deputies of the States-General, and has to follow their advice. As these men are ignorant of war, and are easily influenced by the views of chance acquaintances, whether they possess military experience or not, it will be clear to your Majesty that no success can be expected. I have given my opinion on this matter to the deputies, but I find that they prefer running the risk of defeat and disaster to parting with the command of the army.'[3] 'The politicians are so jealous of their authority

[1] Janiçon, *Etat présent des Provinces Unies*, 1755, vol. i. 18.
[2] *Ibid.* 83.
[3] D'Estrades to Louis XIV., Jan. 28, 1666.

that they themselves prefer to act as general-in-chief, at the risk of ruining their country, to allowing those to direct the army who are fittest to do so. Through the directions of the politicians the troops are so badly distributed that they may perish in their winter quarters before the next campaign opens.'[1]

Under those circumstances it was only natural that the campaign on land was conducted in the most pitiful manner. On paper the Netherlands had an army of 60,000 men, and they paid for this number; yet, through the rule of party politicians who had brought disorganisation and corruption with them, they could collect only 12,500 men with whom to meet the bishop's invasion, although they denuded their fortresses of the garrisons to such an extent that some towns were held by but a few hundred soldiers, while many forts were defended only by a custodian.[2] The Netherlands were invaded and plundered because de Witt and his party, by destroying the army, had encouraged the enemy to invade the country. Nevertheless, de Witt put all blame on Prince John Maurice, the military commander, and explained that he had unfortunately been compelled to leave the direction of military affairs to that Prince, because he himself had to devote his whole attention to managing and directing the navy.[3] With great difficulty, the Dutch succeeded by the help of the French in driving the troops of Münster out of the Netherlands.

Lacking a chief of the State, the country was leaderless. Even during the terrible time of the war, parties and politicians fought one another for place and power. The letters of d'Estrades are full of comments on the continual quarrels and intrigues among the politicians, provinces, and towns. No national authority, no governing brain, directed the policy and the defence of the nation. The country was not ruled by an expert or by a board of experts, acting with common-sense and concentrating their attention upon the business of the nation, but by politicians, who were so absorbed with the party game that they could devote only spare moments to the direction of the country. Hence the most important decisions were taken, not deliberately, but in a hurry, not in accordance with the requirements of the nation,

[1] D'Estrades to Louis XIV., Jan. 7, 1666.

[2] Comte de Guiche, *Mémoires*, 1744, vol. i. 256.* [3] *Ibid.* 196.*

but in obedience to the chance influences, the party-political requirements, and the popular mood of the moment. The French ambassador wrote: 'In this republic and with these people you never know how you really stand, as you do in a monarchy, because everything is dependent upon chance currents and events, and upon the sentiment of the masses. Hence one has constantly to delude the people and to manage affairs in tortuous ways, in order to attain one's aim unnoticed.'[1]

Every Dutch victory increased, every defeat diminished, the influence and the following of de Witt. Many politicians wished for a national defeat, hoping that a national disaster would bring about the fall of the ruling party and of the Pensioner. 'It is the dearest wish of the States to ruin M. de Witt, and, de Witt being alone responsible for the conclusion of the Franco-Dutch Alliance of 1662, they rejoice at all the difficulties which the Netherlands experience in their dealings with France.'[2] The dissensions of the Dutch were skilfully utilised by their enemies, who strove to increase them in every way. 'The partisans of the Prince of Orange and of the King of England have distributed letters and pamphlets attacking de Witt and denouncing him to the people as the author of the Anglo-Dutch war, which they say was caused by his ambition to command the fleet and to make himself master of all affairs of State, and they have succeeded so well in their agitation that everywhere in town, on the boats and in the streets, de Witt is talked of as a traitor to his country.'[3]

The naval war became long drawn out, because, in the naval battles fought, success and failure alternated on both sides. The English ravaged the Dutch coasts, burned an enormous number of ships, and destroyed the Dutch trade with the Baltic. The Dutch revenged themselves by raiding the Thames and burning Chatham. The burning of Chatham was easy and without danger, as the English fleet had disarmed in the expectation of peace. The Dutch fleet was jointly commanded by de Ruyter and by Cornelius de Witt, a brother of the Pensioner. The States voted an identical reward to the admiral and the civilian and a picture was placed in the town hall of Dordrecht, repre-

[1] D'Estrades to Louis XIV., Jan. 21, 1666. [2] *Ibid.* April 9, 1665.
[3] D'Estrades to de Lionne, Oct. 26, 1665.

senting the burning of Chatham, in which Cornelius de Witt, occupying the whole foreground, is crowned with laurel by genii, but de Ruyter is invisible. The admiral had the merit, the politician took for himself the glory of that exploit. An engraving of that picture may be found in vol. xiii. of Wagenaar's History.

The burning of Chatham, which in reality was an unimportant affair, was magnified by John de Witt into a great victory in order to increase his greatly diminished prestige, and, in his reports of the raid on the Thames, 'he killed with his pen five or six thousand Englishmen who were alive, and burned with his candle some twenty ships which were safely anchored in the Thames.'[1] This was the closing episode of the second Anglo-Dutch war.

At last both nations became exhausted. The English government was unpopular, and England was visited by two terrible disasters. On Sunday, September 2, 1666, about two in the morning, a fire broke out in Pudding Lane, near Fish Street, in one of the most crowded quarters of London. It originated in a bakehouse, and as the buildings in the neighbourhood were made of wood, it rapidly spread, favoured by a strong wind and the pusillanimity of the authorities. Soon the metropolis was a roaring sea of fire. In five days two-thirds of London were reduced to ashes. Besides, the Great Plague, described by De Foe, raged during the war, 'broke the trade of the nation and swept away about 100,000 souls.'[2] The Fire of London and the Great Plague were the best allies of the Dutch. Without the aid of these the power of the Netherlands would probably have been destroyed. The Dutch merchants were almost ruined through the activity of the English warships; trade was at a standstill. The continuation of the war would have brought about universal bankruptcy and a revolution in Holland. These circumstances made for the conclusion of the war, and in 1667 the Treaty of Breda brought peace to the distracted Netherlands.

By the stipulations of the Peace of Breda, the Netherlands had to abandon to England all their possessions in North America, which a century later were wrested from the English by George Washington. The principal aim of the Dutch negotiations was

[1] Comte de Guiche, *Mémoires*, 1744, vol. ii. 112.*

[2] Burnet, *History of his Own Time*, 1724, vol. i. 122.

to have the Navigation Laws repealed; but notwithstanding their most strenuous endeavours, these enactments remained in force. 'Nothing could more effectually demonstrate the excellency of the English Navigation Act than the Dutch plenipotentiaries so strenuously insisting at the Treaty of Breda that the sea laws were destructive of the Hollanders' commerce, and should therefore be made void.' [1]

'Soon after the Treaty of Breda, maritime supremacy was permanently transferred from the Dutch to the English. Whatever may have been the cause of this change, whether the Navigation Acts or the war losses suffered by the Dutch, the stoppage of their trade, insecurity of capital, or the crushing weight of war debts and taxes, England's maritime resources increased, whilst those of Holland declined. London became what Amsterdam had been until then, the chief emporium of the commercial world.' [2]

The conclusion of peace was celebrated with the utmost joy by the unfortunate Dutch, and de Witt took part in the public rejoicing. He mingled freely with the crowd, and drank and danced in front of his house during a long part of the night.[3] De Witt, the party politician, affected to consider the Treaty of Breda as a triumph of Dutch diplomacy and as a personal triumph, for he could boast that he had saved to the Dutch merchants one of the Spice Islands which England demanded. Therefore he drank and danced on the Peace night. Had he been a statesman, a patriot, or merely a man with a conscience and a sense of honour and responsibility for the misery which he had wrought to his nation by his mismanagement, he would have shot himself.

[1] Anderson, *History of Commerce*, 1764, vol. ii. 133.
[2] Lindsay, *History of Merchant Shipping*, 1874, vol. ii. 195.
[3] Cerisier, *Histoire des Provinces Unies*, vol. vii. 85.*

CHAPTER XVII

FRANCE, STRIVING AFTER COMMERCIAL, INDUSTRIAL AND MARITIME EMINENCE, BECOMES ENVIOUS OF THE PROSPERITY OF THE DUTCH, AND COLBERT DESTROYS MUCH OF THEIR PROSPERITY BY INTRODUCING PROTECTION, WHICH BECOMES GENERAL IN EUROPE.

'Commercial nations can exist for a long time in a position of mediocrity, but if they become great, their greatness does not last. They rise slowly, and hardly noticeably, to eminence, and their actions do not attract the attention of the world, but as soon as other States become aware of the great prosperity of a commercial nation, they hasten to deprive it of its prosperity which it has gained, one might almost say, by stealth.'—MONTESQUIEU, *Grandeur et Décadence des Romains*, chap. iv.

'When trade is at stake it is your last entrenchment. You must defend it or perish.'—Earl of CHATHAM, March 8, 1739.

THE conclusion of the Treaty of Breda, which ended the second Anglo-Dutch war, was greeted with jubilation by the politicians and the people of the Netherlands. All felt relieved that the terrible burden and anxiety of the war had been removed. However, there was little cause for rejoicing, for while the war was still in progress, France had unmistakably shown that she meant to exalt herself at the cost of the Dutch, and that her feelings towards them were those of malevolence and of barely disguised hostility. All clear-sighted Dutchmen had, during the war, become aware that they would soon have to fight France for their very existence.

The fact that France had evaded her treaty obligations towards the Netherlands by not assisting them against England, and that during the war, friction between France and the Netherlands, caused by the former, had been frequent, had clearly shown the ill-will of France. Louis XIV. wished to acquire the Spanish Netherlands, and he feared that the Dutch Netherlands and

England would oppose his ambitions. Striving to weaken both the Netherlands and England, he had done all he could to bring about the second Anglo-Dutch war and to prolong it as much as possible, hoping that the English and Dutch fleets would weaken each other so much that the naval force of France, which was rapidly increasing, would be equal to that of England and the Netherlands when shattered by war.[1] The secret, but most determined, hostility of France to the Netherlands was clear to all who had eyes to see.

The hostility of France had grown gradually, and was due, largely, perhaps principally, to economic causes. We must therefore cast a glance at economic France.

Up to a comparatively recent time, France, like England, was industrially and commercially a very backward country. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, France had hardly any roads, navigable waterways, shipping, or manufacturing industries. In 1624, Cardinal Richelieu became virtually the ruler of France, and he resolved to reform not only the political and military organisation of the country, but also to develop its wealth-creating resources.

At the beginning of Richelieu's administration, France was powerless at sea. The French Huguenots, in the possession of La Rochelle, made war upon France, and plundered her coasts and shipping, and as the French government did not possess an adequate navy, it suffered the humiliation of being compelled to borrow twenty ships and their crews from the Dutch in order to subdue its rebellious subjects.[2] This state of affairs was intolerable, and Richelieu resolved to give to France a powerful navy. With this object in view, the cardinal published during the second year of his administration his celebrated 'Règlement pour la Mer,' in which he laid down his naval programme. He founded the Inscription Maritime, he created in 1627 the regiment of marines, and he spent large sums on the building of warships. His naval policy, which was modelled on that of the Dutch, who then were the foremost naval Power in the world, proved eminently successful. In less than twenty years France built a considerable fleet, and she determined to acquire with its help a

[1] Burnet, *History of his Own Time*, 1724, i. 112.
[2] Caillet, *Richelieu*, 311.

prominent position on the ocean, and a large share of the world's commerce and colonies. In 1643, a year after Richelieu's death, a French author, in dedicating an important book on naval affairs to Louis XIII., wrote, 'During the last century our neighbours have fought among themselves for the rule of the sea, and have endeavoured to acquire the good things of the world without giving a thought to the rights of France. Spain and Portugal have claimed the new worlds discovered and to be discovered, on the strength of a Papal Bull, while the Dutch have succeeded in creating for themselves the monopoly of the world's trade and navigation, which they defend with their writings. But all this is vanity, for the fleets of France are the keys with which your Majesty will open stronger doors than those which consist only of paper.'[1] France had become conscious of her naval strength, and the foregoing words embodied her maritime ambitions and aims. She meant to become a great maritime Power, and, if possible, to wrest from the Dutch the empire of the sea.

Richelieu had striven not only to strengthen the navy of France, but also to develop her commerce and industries. He had sent, in 1629, Baron de Courmesmin to Denmark, Sweden and Russia to conclude commercial treaties with those nations, in order to enable the merchants of France to sell to them the silks, drugs, spices and precious stones which they bought from India, Persia and Turkey. The mission was successful, and France acquired a footing in the Baltic trade, which hitherto had been the preserve of the Dutch and English. In 1627 Richelieu had created, with the help of Nicholas Witte, a native of Alkmaar, a chartered company for the development of trade modelled on the Dutch East India Company. Within six months from the date of its registration, that company was to bring into France 400 families, skilled in commerce, fishing and various manufactures, and at least twelve ships suitable for fishing and trading purposes. The foreigners brought over by, or taking an interest in, the company were immediately to receive full citizen's rights. Noblemen, officers, and the clergy were encouraged to put money into that venture, and thirty-two patents of nobility were reserved for those who advanced the interests of the company.[2] In the

[1] Père Fournier, *Hydrographie*, 1643, Preface. [2] Caillet, *Richelieu*, 334.

course of Richelieu's administration, various other companies were founded, settlements were formed in Madagascar and other tropical countries, tobacco, cotton and spices were planted, &c.

Richelieu's successor, Cardinal Mazarin, who administered France from 1642 to 1661, did not understand, and paid little attention to, commercial and maritime affairs. During his rule, France neglected her trade and industries almost completely. 'People in France,' reported the Dutch ambassador, 'do not take much trouble about trade and navigation, and seem to treat them with greater contempt than they have done ever before.' [1] 'The people of this Court say that they wish and hope that the commerce and shipping of the whole Universe should fall to the Dutch, to the exclusion of all other nations, because France has no ambition in commercial matters, and is satisfied to buy from the Dutch all the goods which she requires.' [2]

During Mazarin's administration, Richelieu's economic policy was abandoned; but Colbert, who in 1661 began to direct the economic policy of France, resuscitated Richelieu's programme of commercial, maritime and colonial expansion, and developed it with the utmost energy and the greatest success.

In Colbert's time the Netherlands possessed practically the world's monopoly in commerce and shipping, as has been shown in Chapters VII. and X. Therefore it was natural that he and those statesmen of France who wished to make their country rich by trade and industry looked with envy upon the prosperity of the Dutch. They had seen the Dutch navy shattered by English fleets, they had observed that Cromwell's Navigation Act of 1651 had forced much Dutch trade into English hands, and they wished to follow Cromwell's example.

England could exclude Dutch shipping because she had a merchant marine, but France could not do so, having practically no ships of her own. Desiring to adapt England's maritime policy to the somewhat different circumstances of France, the French began their attack upon the trading supremacy of the Dutch by charging fifty sous per ton on all foreign shipping entering the French ports. As practically the whole foreign trade of France, and even the coastwise trade between the

[1] Ambassador Boreel to de Witt, Oct. 30, 1654.
[2] *Ibid.* March 23, 1656.

different French ports, was carried on by Dutch ships, that measure was in reality aimed only at the Dutch. These tonnage dues were very harmful to the Netherlands. The Dutch ambassador in Paris reported: 'The innovations made in trade and navigation in France are ruinous for the Dutch, and it is absolutely necessary to retaliate on the commerce and the navigation of France, in order to have them abolished. Dutch merchants might, for instance, boycott the French wines and push the sale of Rhenish wines in their stead.'[1] De Witt urged in vain upon the French government that, in accordance with the principles of free trade and of equal opportunities for all, the charge of fifty sous should be converted into a duty for revenue purposes only, and should be levied indiscriminately from French and foreign shipping.[2] During 1661 and 1662 the Dutch government constantly strove to have the tonnage dues repealed, as may be seen from the diplomatic correspondence of the time, but the steps which the Dutch ambassador took with the King and with Colbert were unsuccessful. Meanwhile the maritime trade of France was rapidly being transferred from Dutch to French hands, and the Dutch ambassador wrote: "Soon the Dutch shippers will have to stay at home, for the French are making themselves the masters of their carrying trade.'[3]

Not satisfied with depriving the Dutch of part of their shipping trade by means of the tonnage dues, France freed Dunkirk—the French harbour nearest to the Netherlands—from all imposts. The Dutch protested against that step. They pointed out that that measure would be destructive to Dutch commerce, and at the same time harmful to France, because the freedom from harbour dues would attract to Dunkirk an enormous quantity of shipping and thus cause a large loss to the French revenue. The French ambassador, with subtle irony, thanked the Dutch for their kindly advice, but informed them that France gave up without regret the revenues arising from the trade of Dunkirk in the hope that a large number of the manufacturers and workers who, during the last twenty years, had emigrated from Flanders and Brabant to Holland, would, through that measure, be induced

[1] Van Beuningen to de Witt, January 14, 1661.
[2] De Witt to van Beuningen, June 13, 1661.
[3] Boreel to Witt, May 18, 1663.

to go back to their country and trade in future *via* Dunkirk, to the great benefit of France.[1]

France had hitherto pursued a policy of free trade. 'With hardly any exception, customs duties had, up to the time of Colbert, been levied solely for revenue purposes. The State saw in its customs-house simply a financial resource, and not a means of influencing and directing the prosperity of the country. When Colbert became the director of the economic policy of France, he resolved to substitute a far-sighted policy of protection for taxation by the rule of thumb, being guided by the ambition to elevate France to the foremost rank among commercial and manufacturing nations, and recognising in the rearrangement of import and export duties a powerful means for carrying out his great aim.'[2]

Colbert's ideal was a self-sufficient France, independent of foreigners for all its necessaries, and exporting its surplus produce,[3] and he pursued his ideal in the most practical and business-like manner.

By order of the King, every commercial town and every port selected the two ablest merchants, and three of these were attached to Colbert to aid him with their advice. They assisted him in examining all economic questions, and their proposals were submitted to a newly constituted body, the Council of Commerce, which was representative of the whole body economic of the country, and which was presided over by Louis XIV. in person. The tariff which resulted from the deliberations of Colbert and the two bodies of experts had the following aims:

1. To reduce the existing export duties on all home produce and all manufactured articles of France;

2. To reduce the existing import duties on all raw materials required by the French manufacturing industries;

3. To exclude, by increased import duties, all foreign manufactured goods which could be produced in France.

These principles mark a turning-point in the economic history of the world. All European governments recognised their value and soon adopted them, with such modifications as individual

[1] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. ii. 101.*

[2] Bailly, *Histoire Financière*, 1830, 439.

[3] Sargeant, *Colbert*, 1899, 74.

circumstances suggested.[1] Thus Colbert closed the feudal and opened the industrial era, and, through the encouragement of the various governments, manufacturing soon became general in Europe. The industries of Europe, and especially the industries of England, were created by protection. They owe their existence chiefly to the fostering care of the State.

The foregoing three principles of economic policy were only in part adopted in the general tariff of 1664, which was purposely designed to promote the trade and merchant shipping of France at the cost of the Dutch.[2] The French tariff of 1664 was as deliberately directed against the all-powerful industries of the Netherlands as Bismarck's tariff of 1879 was aimed against the then all-powerful industries of England.[3]

When Colbert entered upon his duties, the position of France was similar to that which Germany occupied after the Franco-German war of 1870–1871. France was by far the strongest military Power on the continent of Europe, but her navy, her merchant marine, and her manufacturing industries were quite insignificant. Colbert, like Bismarck, resolved to make the foremost military Power also a great, and perhaps the foremost, commercial and industrial Power. In this connection it seems worth mentioning that Bismarck's economic policy and his protective tariff of 1879 were modelled on the policy and tariffs of Colbert, and that he reintroduced that form of protection which Adam Smith stigmatised with the word 'mercantilism.'

In his celebrated 'Mémoire sur le Commerce,' which Colbert submitted to the Council of Commerce on August 3, 1664, that great minister declared 'The power of the King of France on land is greater than that of any other State in Europe, but on the sea his power is not sufficient, and it is necessary to make France equally strong on sea and land. At present France has less than 200 good ships in her harbours, while the Dutch possess no less than 16,000 ships. It is intended, with the assistance of protection, to increase the ships of France within eight or ten years to about 2,000. The shipping of the world will probably rearrange itself in this way, that the Dutch will

[1] Bailly, *Histoire Financière*, 442.
[2] MacCulloch, *Treatises and Essays*, 1859, 360.
[3] *Modern Germany*, 1905, chap. xii.

lose from 1,200 to 1,500 ships to France, while other nations trading with France will lose to us from 500 to 800 ships.'[1]

The Dutch possessed the world's supremacy not only in trade and shipping, but also in manufacturing. French manufacturers were unable to compete unaided with the all-powerful Dutch industries. Colbert stated, 'Our manufactures of cloth, serge, and other stuffs, of paper, hardware, silk, linen, and soap, and various other industries are almost ruined. The Dutch have destroyed all these industries, and they supply us with the goods with which our own industries might supply us, had they not been destroyed. Thus the Dutch drain the wealth out of the country. If our manufactures are re-established under the shelter of protection, and if we exclude the Dutch manufactured goods, the Dutch will have to buy from us those of our productions which they require for their own consumption, or for trading purposes, and which are indispensable to them, and thus the wealth and power of France will be increased at the cost of the Dutch.'[2] The foregoing statements show that the tariff of 1664 was intended to stimulate and to encourage French home production by handicapping the all-powerful Dutch industries.

The industries of France could not as yet stand alone. Time was needed for their development, but in the short period of three years, Colbert seems to have considered that the success of his policy warranted an extension of his system of protection. Just as Bismarck's moderate protective tariff of 1879 was followed in 1882 by a new tariff under which higher duties were exacted, so Colbert's protective tariff of 1664 was followed by the revised tariff of 1667, by which the duties on foreign merchandise were in many cases doubled and in some cases more than doubled. Colbert clearly stated the aim and object of his policy by writing to his brother, in 1669, 'My idea is to impose a duty sufficient to encourage our manufacturers, and to gradually and gently oust the foreigners.'[3]

One nation's difficulties are another nation's opportunities. Colbert wisely utilised the time of the second Anglo-Dutch war, when the Netherlands were unable to quarrel with France, for

[1] Colbert, *Lettres*, 1861, vol. ii. 267.**
[2] Colbert, *Mémoire sur le Commerce*, 1664.
[3] Sargeant, *Colbert*, 1899, 72.

introducing his new tariff, which practically excluded all Dutch manufactures from France.

When the French tariff of 1667 was published, the Dutch ambassador in Paris wrote, 'As the French mean to exclude all Dutch goods, and as all our complaints and remonstrances have proved useless, it is necessary to prevent French goods from entering the Netherlands,'[1] and de Witt answered by return of post, 'Nothing but retaliation remains to combat the fresh imposts which have been put on our goods, or rather the indirect exclusion of our goods, which has been decreed by the new French tariff.'[2]

Some Dutch writers on economic matters, such as Arend Tollenaer, advised the introduction of retaliatory navigation laws, and the adoption of a vigorous policy of resistance and reprisals; but the Dutch were afraid to defend their trade with energy. They had allowed themselves to become completely dependent for their existence on their foreign trade, they had therefore become exceedingly vulnerable on sea, and they feared that a policy of retaliation might lead to foreign complications which they dreaded all the more as they had allowed their fleet to decay. Their naval supremacy having disappeared, their commercial supremacy, which their ancestors had won for them by the sword, was bound to disappear as well, for that which is conquered by the sword must be held by the sword.

To a commercial nation trade is as necessary as territorial possessions, and it must defend the former as determinedly as the latter or it will decay. The basis of an agricultural nation is land, that of a commercial nation, trade, and he who deliberately destroys the trade of a commercial State deprives its inhabitants of their means of subsistence. Therefore the Earl of Chatham said, in 1739, 'When trade is at stake it is your last intrenchment. You must defend it or perish.' The Dutch were to experience the truth of that maxim.

Deeds, not words, were wanted when France began to destroy the trade and industries of the Dutch, but as orating politicians are abler at speaking than at acting, John de Witt tried to persuade Louis XIV. that the protective policy of France was

[1] Van Beuningen to de Witt, April 29, 1667.

[2] De Witt to van Beuningen, May 5, 1667.

most harmful to France herself, and that it was to the interest of the King to abandon that pernicious and suicidal policy. However, de Witt's arguments were very unconvincing and proved unsuccessful.[1]

Colbert not only protected and encouraged the weak industries of France by his tariff, but he strove before all to enable the French industries to maintain themselves unaided against all competition, and to create new industries. With this object in view he attracted to France a great number of the most skilled workers from the Netherlands, England, Italy and Germany. Colbert also induced many Dutch manufacturers to settle in France. He founded excellent seminaries of commerce and industry directed by the ablest industrialist whom he could procure, and established model factories by which new industries were taught. He created an organisation for distributing economic knowledge, for ascertaining the requirements of foreign nations, for improving industrial processes and for eliminating all influences hampering the expansion of French business. His principal aim was to create and to educate, to unify and harmonise all the industrial forces, but not to needlessly interfere with them. The greatest artists of France had to assist Colbert. Art was made subservient to industry. Lebrun directed the royal furniture works. Thus the artistic industries of France were established.

Soon France became celebrated for her china and glass ware, her silks and her woollen cloths, her laces and tapestries. To cheapen transport, the roads of France were greatly improved, and many new roads, canals, docks and harbours were constructed. Colbert brought order into the State finances, reduced the interest on money charged by bankers, abolished seventeen holidays, restricted the number of monks and nuns, created colonial trading and insurance companies on the models of the Dutch institutions, improved the laws and regulations relating to commerce, and created commercial arbitration courts, the 'Conseils de Prud'hommes' for abolishing industrial disputes and litigation. Through Colbert's wise and energetic measures, the industries of France increased with great rapidity. Already in 1669, the wool industries of France possessed 44,200 looms,

[1] Laspeyres *Volkswirtschaftliche Anschauungen*, 1863, 130.

and more than 60,000 workers. The cloth manufacturers of Sedan, Louvière, Abbeville, where 500 Dutch weavers were settled, and Elbœuf were the finest in the world; France produced finer soaps than Persia and Turkey; the glass-ware of Tour-la-ville outshone that of Venice.[1]

From year to year the Dutch suffered more severely from the State-aided competition of the French industries, from year to year their complaints became louder. The tension between France and the Netherlands increased. At the time when France had entered upon her policy of protection, her fiscal measures were ostensibly directed against all nations, but when the complaints of the Dutch became louder, and when reproaches were followed by threats, Colbert at last threw off the mask, and, proud of the success of his policy, revealed his aims with brutal frankness. On March 21, 1669, he wrote to M. de Pomponne, the French ambassador at The Hague, who had succeeded d'Estrades: 'The maritime trade of the world is carried on by about 20,000 vessels. In the natural order of things, every nation ought to possess a share in the world's shipping, proportionate to its power, to the number of its inhabitants, and to the extent of its coast. However, the Dutch possess from 15,000 to 16,000 ships and the French have now at most from 500 to 600 ships. In order to rectify matters, the King will do everything in his power to acquire that number of ships which France by right ought to possess.'[2] When de Witt bitterly complained that the commercial aggression of France was ruinous to the industries of the Netherlands, Colbert sarcastically wrote: 'Monsieur de Witt need not be surprised that trade has fallen off, for that has happened everywhere; but there is reason to hope that trade will improve, and then no State and no industry in the world can hinder the Netherlands doing nearly all the trade there is. The kingdom of France can create manufactures, but they can be only on a small scale, and though these will benefit the subjects of the King, they can never do any harm to the great establishments of the Netherlands.'[3]

During several years the Dutch ambassadors at the French Court had tried to induce France to reverse her economic policy

[1] Duruy, *Histoire de France.*

[2] Colbert, *Lettres*, 1861, vol. ii. 463.**

[3] *Ibid.* 489.

by expostulations, threats, entreaties and by eloquent demonstrations that the fiscal policy of France was unscientific, mistaken, and most harmful to herself, because they had been told that the Netherlands were meant by nature to be, and always to remain, the foremost industrial, commercial and maritime country in the world.[1] When they saw that all their scientific arguments were useless, and that their trade and industries were rapidly falling into the hands of the French, the Dutch threatened at last that they would prohibit the importation of French merchandise, such as wine, brandy, vinegar, chestnuts, salt, &c., which went in very large quantities to the Netherlands. However, these threats made no impression whatever upon Colbert, who knew quite well that the Netherlands would harm themselves more than France by excluding French goods, because the Dutch merchants required them for re-sale to other nations and could find no substitute for most of the French productions.[2] A Dutch ambassador had written: 'The French know quite well that the trade of France is necessary to the Netherlands and that the Dutch cannot harm them, because those nations which require the productions of France would promptly fetch them from France and carry there those goods which the French themselves require.'[3]

The Dutch had allowed their prosperity to become dependent upon the goodwill of foreign nations, because a one-sided development of the Dutch trade and industries had for a time been most profitable to them, and they had to suffer for foolishly preferring profit to security, and placing the sources of their prosperity into the hands of foreigners. A profitable policy, a policy which prefers immediate cash profit to permanent and sound advantage and to safety, is unwise and dangerous not only in political matters, as has been shown, but in purely commercial matters as well, as will appear hereafter.

As time progressed, the economic policy of France and Colbert's attitude towards the Netherlands became increasingly aggressive. Colbert no longer endeavoured to spare the susceptibilities of the Dutch, but stated that he desired the economic

[1] See page 302 f.

[2] Laspeyres, *Volkswirtschaftliche Anschauungen*, 1863, 130

[3] Ambassador Boreel to de Witt, March 23, 1656.

decay of the Netherlands so that French traders and manufacturers might take the place of the Dutch. He wrote in 1670 to Pomponne, 'If commerce and manufactures decrease in Holland, they are bound to increase in some other countries, and by encouragement and application the King may succeed in attracting to France part of the industries which are leaving the Netherlands. It is necessary for the welfare of France that the increase of our commerce and manufactures should coincide with a real and serious shrinkage of the commerce and industries of the Dutch.'[1]

At last France and the Netherlands drifted into a tariff war, which was bound to be disastrous to the Dutch, and Colbert contemptuously wrote: 'They are like a man gambling with 100,000 crowns against a man who has nothing. We risk nothing because we have nothing to lose, but we can gain much.'[2] These words bring to mind the saying of the Dutch ambassador shortly before the outbreak of the first Anglo-Dutch war, 'The English are about to attack a mountain of gold, the Dutch a mountain of iron.'[3] It is dangerous for a nation to be rich and easily vulnerable.

Colbert's economic policy became from year to year more destructive to the Netherlands, and was copied by other nations. The unprotected industries of the Dutch were an ideal target for other nations to shoot at, and all Europe hastened to imitate France. Seeing France attacking the trade and all the industries of the Dutch with success and impunity, and rapidly enriching herself at the cost of the Netherlands, England, Sweden, Denmark and other States soon followed with protectionist measures, modelled upon those designed by Colbert.

The whole world attacked the maritime, commercial and industrial supremacy of the Dutch, and under the stress of universal competition the wealth of the Netherlands declined rapidly, to the advantage of her competitors. 'The Dutch had reached the zenith of their prosperity about 1649; from that time onwards they began to lose the lead in the race, and their rivals, who imitated their methods, became their successful competitors.'[4]

[1] Sargeant, *Colbert*, 1899, 78.

[2] Colbert to Pomponne, Jan. 30, 1671. [3] See page 272.

[4] Cunningham, *Western Civilisation*, vol. ii. 1898, 203.

In 1672, Sir William Temple wrote, 'I am of opinion that trade has, for some years, passed its meridian, and has begun sensibly to decay among the Dutch, whereof there seem to be several causes, namely, firstly, the general application which so many nations have made to it within these two or three and twenty years. For since the Peace of Münster, in 1648, restored the quiet of Christendom, not only Sweden and Denmark, but especially France and England, have busied themselves about matters of trade.'[1] 'The English Navigation Acts had brought about so vast an alteration in a few years that English merchants were about to become the great carriers of Europe,'[2] and Josiah Child wrote in 1668: 'Without this Act we had not now been owners of the shipping nor trade, nor should have employed one half of the seamen we do at present.'[3]

The English and the French Navigation Acts, protective tariffs and prohibitions, were nominally directed against all countries, but they were in reality aimed only against the Netherlands. England and France vied with each other in destroying the wealth and industries of the Dutch. De la Court and other Dutch writers on economic matters frequently discussed whether England by her more direct and more violent, or France by her indirect, more comprehensive and more scientific, attack, had done greater damage to the United Provinces.[4]

Under the stress of these attacks, the prosperity of the Netherlands was visibly declining. It is true that the Netherlands were a garden and a treasure-house of wealth and of art.[5] It is true that they were still in outward appearance the richest and the greatest commercial State in the world, with the most extensive trade and possessions, 'the most prodigious growth that has been seen in the world,' as Sir William Temple put it. It is also true that in the Bank of Amsterdam there was kept 'the greatest treasure in bars of gold and silver, plate, and infinite bags of metal, which are supposed to be all gold and silver, that is known anywhere in the world,' and that 'the credit

[1] Sir Wm. Temple, *United Provinces*, 1672, chap. vi.**
[2] Anderson, *History of Commerce*, 1664, vol. ii. 110.
[3] J. Child, *Observations Concerning Trade*, 1668.
[4] Laspeyres, *Volkswirtschaftliche Anschauungen*, 1863, 126.*
[5] Michelet, *Histoire de France*, 1876, vol. xv. 170.

of the whole town or State of Amsterdam in stock and revenue was equal to that of some kingdoms, and that that town was the most beautiful and most expensively built and adorned city in the world.'[1] However, dead wealth is of little value compared with active and productive wealth. For instance, £50,000 invested in a picture is, from the national point of view, a very unsatisfactory substitute for £50,000 invested in a factory. It is true that towards the end of the seventeenth century the volume of Dutch trade was still increasing, but profits were rapidly shrinking, and while the commerce of the Netherlands grew at a slow pace, that of England and of France advanced with giant strides.

The fact that, according to Sir William Temple, the repayment of part of the national debt was looked upon as an evil of the first magnitude by investors, who received their money 'with tears, not knowing how to dispose of it to interest with such safety and ease,' and that only two or three per cent. interest could be obtained on money, shows that the openings for the profitable employment of capital were rapidly becoming fewer in the Netherlands, that commerce and industry requiring money were shrinking, that the springs of wealth were drying up.

The plenty and cheapness of loanable capital are usually not signs of the wealth of a nation, but of the wealth of a narrow class which finds it difficult to invest that money in productive industry because the producers are comparatively few. The cheapness of money arises more often from the stagnation of national production than from the abundance of national wealth.

The Netherlands were rapidly becoming a capitalist country, which lent its funds to foreign industries and foreign nations. This is not a desirable but a deplorable state of affairs. It will appear in another chapter that it is exceedingly dangerous for a nation to rely for its subsistence not on its productive industries but on its trade, which is an uncertain resource, and on its invested capital, largely invested abroad, which is a still more uncertain resource. Such a nation places its whole economic existence at the mercy of foreigners, and its wealth may vanish in a night.

The economic policy of France had been highly successful. She had greatly increased her trade and her industries at the

[1] Sir Wm. Temple, *United Provinces*, 1672, chap. ii.**

expense of the Netherlands, and by her skilful economic policy alone she would, in course of time, have acquired a further large share of the wealth of the Dutch. However, her rulers, impatient at the gradual progress of industry and wealth in France, wished to deprive the Dutch of their industries and possessions at one stroke. France was a powerful but comparatively poor military State, the Dutch were an opulent nation whose government by endless talk, and whose army under civilian control, aroused the derision and contempt of Frenchmen of action. The same material and psychological causes which had made the first Anglo-Dutch war unavoidable, were now irresistibly forcing France into an attack upon the Netherlands.

CHAPTER XVIII

WHILE LOUIS XIV. PREPARES EVERYTHING FOR INVADING AND CRUSHING THE NETHERLANDS, THE DUTCH POLITICIANS FOLLOW A POLICY OF PEACE AND ECONOMY, QUARREL AMONG THEMSELVES FOR POWER, AND REDUCE AND DISORGANISE THEIR MILITARY FORCES

'That which is a common concern to all is very generally neglected. The energies of man are stimulated by that which depends on himself alone, and of which he only is to reap the whole profit or glory. In concerns common to him with others, he employs with reluctance as much attention and activity as his own interest requires. He neglects that of which he thinks other men will take care, and as other men prove equally negligent, the common interest is universally abandoned. Those families are commonly the worst served in which the domestics are the most numerous.'—ARISTOTLE, *Politics*, book ii. chap. ii.

'The unity of a State is seen by the unity of those who rule it.'—TACITUS, *Annales*, book i.

'A Politician thinks of the next Election, a Statesman of the next Generation; a Politician looks for the success of his party, a Statesman for that of his country; the Statesman wishes to steer, while the Politician is satisfied to drift.'—A. CLARKE.

'The Prime Minister is the head of a Political Party. He may be a politician of no official experience, having acquired his position by skill in debate, or by his adroitness in guiding his followers. When in office, his time is chiefly occupied in defending his position against ambitious opponents, and in conciliating dissatisfied adherents. Thus, abilities which should be devoted to the service of the State, are often employed in schemes for strengthening his majority or defending the attacks of his assailants.'—Duke of SOMERSET, *Monarchy and Democracy*, 1880, p. 164.

ECONOMIC causes were mainly responsible for the great and growing hostility which France manifested towards the Dutch, but political causes had added to her malice.

'Flagrant ingratitude is not only unlovely but also unwise in

statesmanship as in private life.'[1] We have seen in Chapter XI. that at the Peace of Münster, in 1648, the Dutch had treasonably abandoned France, their ally, and had deliberately deprived her of the Spanish Netherlands, for which France had fought, and to which she was entitled. That short-sighted act of treachery was never forgotten by the French, nor had Louis XIV., who had witnessed it, given up his intention to conquer the Spanish Netherlands for France. Had the Prince of Orange been the chief of the Netherlands, the resentment of France might perhaps have been allayed and overcome, but the rulers of France could not forget that the governing party in the Netherlands was the same which previously had signed the Peace of Münster. In the eyes of the French King, that was an unpardonable transaction, yet had it not been for the mistakes and insults of the Dutch politicians, who aggravated their offence, as will be presently shown, the Franco-Dutch war of 1672, which was largely a war of revenge, would perhaps never have taken place.[2]

The Dutch treason of 1648 had neither been forgotten nor forgiven by the French, and, in 1656, when the Netherlands tried to conclude an alliance with France, the Dutch ambassador described the frame of mind of the French as follows: 'The people in this country say that France broke with Spain before 1648, urged on by the Netherlands, and assured by them that peace would be concluded only in common by the allies. Hence they blame the Dutch government in unmeasured and unbearably bitter terms for not having kept faith with them. I have heard these aspersions myself, in the French parliament, where I was incognito. They say that the Dutch made a separate peace, deserting France, and leaving her distracted with war in order to be able to rob France in the meantime of her commerce and navigation throughout the world; that the trade and industries of France are utterly ruined, and that all the ports and towns of the country are overrun with Dutch traders, and swamped with Dutch goods. Thus they declare the Dutch have acquired all the trade of France, and they abuse their commercial supremacy by selling their goods at extortionate profit. . . . I

[1] Bismarck, *Gedanken und Erinnerungen*, chap. xii.
[2] *Archives d'Orange*, série ii. vol. iv. 125.**

believe the piracy in the Mediterranean is encouraged and tolerated by France in order to harm our trade.'[1]

Louis XIV. felt that the Dutch had cheated him out of the Spanish Netherlands, and he meant at the first favourable opportunity to seize those territories and to revenge himself upon the Dutch.

The preservation of peace in Europe depended upon the life of the King of Spain. After his death a great scramble was sure to occur among those who aspired to the Spanish inheritance, and the French were likely to claim at least the Spanish Netherlands, for reasons which will presently be given. In 1662, the Dutch ambassador in Paris reported, 'It appears fairly certain that, if the King of Spain should die without heirs, France will claim the Spanish Netherlands and perhaps the whole succession.'[2] At that time, it seemed indeed very probable that the dynasty of Spain would soon die out, for Philip IV. was reported to be dying, and his infant son, born in 1661, was so weak that he was not expected to live.

In 1665, while the Anglo-Dutch war was in progress, and three years after de Witt had been warned by his ambassador of the imminence of a French attack upon the Spanish Netherlands, Philip IV. died, leaving an infant son, Charles, child of his second wife, heir to the Spanish dominions. Louis XIV. had married the eldest daughter of Philip IV. by that King's first wife, and he claimed in the name of his wife the Spanish Netherlands, by the right of 'devolution,' which was in force in the Spanish Netherlands, according to which the children of the first wife, regardless of sex, inherit before the children of the second wife. As Louis XIV. had previously solemnly renounced all claims to the succession of the Spanish monarchy in general, and to the Spanish Netherlands in particular,[3] he had no legal claim whatever to the Spanish Netherlands. Nevertheless, the official French lawyers proved to the world the justice of Louis's claim, and Spain, instead of mobilising an army in defence of her threatened interests, instructed her official lawyers to refute the king's claim.

Lex in manibus. Might not right, force not legal subtleties,

[1] Ambassador Boreel to de Witt, March 23, 1656.

[2] Van Beuningen to de Witt, February 2, 1662.

[3] Dumont, *Corps Universel Diplomatique*, 1726, vi. i. 283, 8.

being the foundation of all States, Louis, like every statesman of action, relied rather on his sword than on the arguments of his lawyers. He invaded the Spanish Netherlands, and as Spain was quite unprepared, Charleroi, Tournai, Douay, Oudenarde and Lille were rapidly taken by the French. The Dutch, who had chosen to rely for their safety rather on the balance of power in Europe than on their own strength,[1] wished Spain to defend the Dutch frontiers against France, and saw in the Spanish Netherlands a buffer State shielding them against French aggression and ridding them of the necessity of providing for their own safety. Therefore the progress of France was very disconcerting to them, and they wished Europe to stop the advance of Louis XIV. England with alacrity supported the Netherlands in their opposition to the French, not with the intention of assisting the Dutch, but with the object of embroiling them with France, and of later on taking advantage of their difficulties. Sweden sided with the Netherlands in the hope of gain. These being the dispositions of England and Sweden, a triple alliance for the defence of the Spanish Netherlands was easily concluded at The Hague, in 1668, between England, Sweden and the Dutch.

The triple alliance was only a diplomatic fiction. Charles II. of England, before joining the triple alliance, had privately made advances to France to prevent his being obliged to enter into that alliance, and no sooner was the treaty completed than he wrote apologies to his sister, the Duchess of Orleans, and to Louis XIV. himself. Amid the rejoicing at the conclusion of the triple alliance, Sir Thomas Clifford, who possessed more of Charles's confidence than any of his ministers ever did, betrayed by an unguarded expression the secret intentions of his master. 'Notwithstanding all the joy,' said he, 'we must still have another Dutch war.'[2]

Spain had sunk so low that she had only 20,000 soldiers, and practically no ships, while France was strong and ready for war. England and the Netherlands, exhausted by their recent war, would not have been able to resist France even if England had intended to act in good faith by the Dutch, and Sweden only wanted to pocket subsidies. Therefore Louis XIV. might have taken the Spanish Netherlands, notwithstanding the triple

[1] See page 214 f. [2] Sir John Dalrymple, *Memoirs*, 1790, vol. i. 37.

alliance. However, as the child King of Spain was reported to be dying, Louis resolved to give way on the comparatively unimportant question of the Spanish Netherlands, and wait for the death of the child, in order then to claim the whole of the Spanish possessions.

The greater is enemy to the lesser, the better is enemy to the good. People said to be dying often live long. The King of Spain continued to be in a dying condition during the next thirty-two years, and the opportunity of seizing the Spanish Netherlands was lost to France for ever. Fortune is a fickle goddess, and rarely renews its offers to the statesman. Diplomacy is the art of utilising the chances of the moment.

Louis XIV. had given way to the triple alliance, not from fear, but because he wanted to reserve his strength towards the day when he hoped to claim the whole of Spain and her dominions on behalf of his wife. His withdrawal from the Spanish Netherlands was voluntary. Nevertheless he was indignant that the Netherlanders, a nation of shopkeepers, without an army and with a twice defeated fleet, a nation which owed its existence to France, had tried to thwart him.

Under the rule of the party of disintegration, the Netherlands had twice been disastrously defeated by England, and the de Witt government had lost all prestige abroad and much influence at home. To strengthen its shaken position with the Dutch people the government of defeat and surrender, shrinking neither from misrepresentation nor from deception, claimed a glorious, diplomatic and moral victory over France. The withdrawal of Louis XIV. from the Spanish Netherlands was magnified into a diplomatic triumph, which showed that the Netherlands, under the able guidance of de Witt, were still the arbiters of Europe. To commemorate that glorious, but unfortunately only imaginary, diplomatic victory, the Dutch government had in 1668 a medal struck, with the pompous inscription: 'Having strengthened the laws, reformed abuses in religion, assisted, defended and conciliated kings, secured the liberty of the ocean, established by valour and force of arms a glorious peace, and restored tranquillity to Europe, the States-General of the United Provinces have ordered this medal to be struck.' This medal, an engraving of which may be found in the histories of

Le Clerc and of van Loon, besides being ridiculous, was exceedingly offensive to France. But a still greater tactlessness was perpetrated by van Beuningen, the Dutch ambassador in France, and friend of de Witt, who had struck a medal in which he, as Joshua, obscured the sun with a Dutch cheese. This was a personal insult to Louis XIV., 'Le roi soleil,' and was felt as such by the King.

These and many other instances of tactlessness and provocation were due to the fact that the Dutch party politicians, with criminal levity, made use of the foreign policy of their country in playing the party game, for all these boastful medals and declarations were only electioneering tricks. However, as Louis XIV. did not take a hand in the Dutch party game, he was naturally greatly offended by the insulting words and acts of the Dutch government. Therefore we find in the letters of Louis XIV. a distinct tone of dislike towards the Dutch. In his eyes they were tradesmen, a nation of shopkeepers, unbearable in their conceit and their presumption. The boldness of van Beuningen, the ambassador of the United Provinces at St. Germain, had bitterly offended him, and he resolved that he would crush the republic and extend his kingdom to the Rhine.[1]

The numerous writers in the service of de Witt and his party had profusely lauded the profound statesmanship and diplomatic genius of de Witt, but his opponents had pointed out with much force that statesmanship is measured, not by its profoundness but by its success, by victories not by disastrous wars. To silence these bitter and only too well justified criticisms, the States of Holland in 1668 put on record that de Witt had covered during the fifteen years he had been in office 22,591 pages with his handwriting, while his predecessors in office had in sixty-seven years covered only 23,475 pages.[2] It must have cost months of labour to compile these imposing figures. Measured by the quantity of work done, de Witt was undoubtedly the greatest statesman of the Netherlands. Scribe wrote 350 plays, Lope de Vega 2,000 plays, Shakespeare thirty-six plays. Gladstone made more speeches in a year than did Bismarck in

[1] Kitchin, *History of France*, vol. iii. 175.

[2] Kluit, *Historie der Staatsregering*, 1802, vol. iii. 338.**

his whole life. Prolificness and excellence do not go together, for the former is an enemy to the latter. The people who have least to say are as a rule the most verbose, hiding their intellectual insufficiency in a cloud of words. The 'profound statesmanship' of de Witt and his friends consisted in deceiving the electorate; his activity, in writing and speaking voluminously, and in achieving nothing of value. Electioneering tricks are not statesmanship.

It could no longer be a secret to anyone in the Netherlands, and least of all to John de Witt, that France most actively worked for the downfall of the Dutch commonwealth. On September 5, 1668, Ambassador de Groot, the son of the celebrated Hugo Grotius, reported to de Witt from Stockholm: 'I am told every day, especially by the chancellor, who I think is well informed on the subject, that the King of France will not fail to revenge himself on the United Provinces for having been compelled to make peace with Spain, that he will do all he can to ruin the Dutch trade, and that he will conclude a treaty with England for furthering his plans.'[1]

The dissolution of the triple alliance, concluded in 1668 between the Netherlands, England, and Sweden, was the first object of France, and it could be achieved without difficulty, for Sweden had joined the alliance as a profitable speculation, and she had her price, and Charles II., who was in chronic need of money, could easily be bought. Besides, Charles stood under the influence of Roman Catholic Frenchwomen and priests. On March 6, 1669, de Groot reported from Stockholm: 'France works strenuously at detaching Sweden from the triple alliance by the payment of subsidies and by lavish promises.'[2] England also was being won over by France. On April 3, 1669, de Groot wrote: 'The chancellor of Sweden has told me that we must be on our guard against France and keep our eye on England, because that country is being strongly worked upon by France. The English are by nature changeable, and they are jealous of the Dutch. Corruption is being used to bring England on France's side. Besides, the King of England is inclining towards Roman Catholicism, and he is strongly influenced by the views of his French mother.' Furthermore, de Witt knew that Colbert

[1] De Witt, *Lettres*, 1725, vol. iv. 286.** [2] *Ibid.* 347.**

had been sent over to England to detach the English government from its Dutch allies, and attach it by an alliance to France; that bribery had been used on the most lavish scale, and that Marshal Turenne had shown Pufendorf, the Swedish envoy, a letter from Colbert in which the latter had said that his mission to England had been successful, and that he had bought over all the chief ministers of Charles II.[1] Already in 1667, when the Netherlands were still at war with England, de Witt's personal friend, Ambassador van Beuningen, had reported from Paris: 'Here everything is done to win over England in order to make use of that country against the Netherlands. Therefore a French secretary of state said: "As soon as the Dutch make a move against us, we shall set the King of England on to them," and they will possibly succeed in this by bribery.'[2]

Not only political France led by Louis XIV., but economical France guided by Colbert, also worked for a war with the Netherlands. Colbert was very satisfied with the success of his policy, but he became impatient. He would not wait until France had wrested the trade and commerce from the Dutch by economic measures. Wishing to see the full success of his policy, he undoubtedly fomented the war against Holland.[3]

While the political and economic hostility of France was constantly growing, her military and naval power also was increasing at a most alarming rate. Colbert not only undermined the commerce and navigation of the Dutch, but at the same time built up a huge navy, designed to meet the Dutch fleet and to give to the Netherlands the *coup de grâce* as soon as they had been sufficiently impoverished and enfeebled by his ceaseless economic attacks. In 1661, when Colbert entered upon his administration, France had only eighteen warships; in 1667 she had forty warships; in 1672 she had 196 warships.[4] Colbert paid the greatest attention to the navy. By his directions huge arsenals were established at Dunkirk, Havre, and Rochefort. Numerous constructors and shipwrights from Holland, Riga, and Dantzic were induced to settle in France, and an abundant

[1] Sir William Temple to the Lord Keeper, April 24, 1669.
[2] Van Beuningen to de Witt, May 20, 1667.
[3] Clement, *Histoire de Colbert*, 345.
[4] Ammann et Coutant, *Histoire de France*, 1884, 303.

number of excellent seamen were secured by the Inscription Maritime. During the government of Louis XIV. the French navy rose from insignificance to the summit of its power and glory, and more than once defeated the fleets of England.

While Colbert reformed and increased the navy, that great military administrator, Louvois, reformed and strengthened the army. The weak and antiquated French army rapidly became by far the largest, the best organised, the best disciplined, and the best armed military force on the continent of Europe. During the rule of Louis XIV. France was able to raise 500,000 soldiers. She dominated the Continent.

The tension between France and the Netherlands constantly became greater. France was, by her diplomatic arrangements, isolating the Netherlands, and was increasing her army and navy with feverish and ominous haste. Everything pointed to the fact that her preparations were designed for an early attack upon the Netherlands. Meanwhile the Dutch politicians were talking. They were talking when France strained every nerve to ruin the Netherlands. In wilful blindness the Dutch politicians were preaching peace and mutual goodwill among nations. They were agitating for disarmament, and were actually disarming their country, when France quite openly prepared her attack on the Dutch commonwealth.

The position of the Netherlands was insecure by land and sea, but the conclusion of the peace with England in 1667 had given to the Dutch the time necessary to reform their armed forces. As their fleets had been repeatedly defeated by England, it was clear that their semi-insular position no longer protected them against an attack and invasion by sea. As the Dutch army had in 1665 been unable to prevent the invasion by the bishop of Münster, it was clear that it was utterly worthless and that it could not secure the United Provinces against an invasion by France, which possessed by far the largest and best army in the world. Under these circumstances, it might be expected that the leading statesmen of the Netherlands would with the utmost vigour and celerity have prepared their country for the impending and inevitable struggle with France and England combined by strengthening the national military and naval forces to the utmost.

None are so blind as those who will not see. As the

strengthening and the reorganisation of the army by military men would have diminished the power and the privileges of the ruling politicians, the Dutch politicians simply refused to see any danger in the vast preparations of France, and unconditionally opposed the military reorganisation of the Netherlands. Party interests and private interests were opposed to national interests, and the former proved stronger than the latter. The leading politicians of the party of disorganisation and disintegration, instead of preparing their country for war, continued to disarm it. They strove with all their might to explain away the threatening attitude and the warlike preparations of France, and to strengthen their party and their own compromised position against the attacks of the national party, the Orange party, which, in the name of patriotism and of common sense, demanded the organisation of the nation and of its military forces by the Prince of Orange. However, de Witt would rather have seen his country destroyed than his party defeated and his own position jeopardised. Office was more precious to him than country.

In the course of the disastrous Anglo-Dutch war of 1664–67, the power of the party of disintegration had greatly diminished, and that of the Orange party had greatly increased. To satisfy the demands of the latter, the Prince of Orange was received as a child of the State in 1666, and the States of Holland resolved in 1667 that the young Prince William should have a seat in the council to enable him to obtain some knowledge of affairs of State.[1] This concession to national sentiment was made by the oligarchical politicians against their will at a time of stress. Therefore they resolved as soon as possible to take away with the right hand that which they had given with the left, and they 'continued among themselves their intrigues utterly to abolish the stadtholdership; and a resolution was passed that if the States of Holland should at any time be obliged, at the instance of the other provinces, to confer on his Highness the supreme command of the army, that it should be given to him only for a single expedition, and that he should have such limited powers that he should have the title but others the authority of a general, whence they promised themselves to draw this advantage, that all successes should be attributed

[1] Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book li. chap. xv.*

to the civilian deputies who accompanied the army on the part of the States, in whose hands was the chief, if not the sole, direction of affairs, and if any disaster should happen, that that was to be wholly laid upon the ill-conduct, incapacity, and want of experience of the Prince, whose credit they hoped by this means one day to lessen among the people and to render him of no consideration.' [1]

'When the Prince of Orange approached his eighteenth year, the politicians worked hard to employ their friends in all places of authority, to cry up the present government, to extol its prudent management of affairs, the wisdom and affability of the ministers, and to magnify the advantages that had been obtained to the State since the year 1650, when the stadtholderate had been abolished. To this end, in many places medals and pictures were made in honour of those that had the chief direction of the commonwealth. They were likewise to insinuate among the people how dangerous a stadtholder was to their liberty, and how destructive to trade, which they said always flourished most under a pure democracy. They who opposed the unlimited ambitious designs of the House of Orange were to be looked upon as true patriots, the rather because they had not any aims to make themselves richer or greater than they already were, but only wished to preserve that liberty which, at the expense of so much blood and treasure, they had so many years fought for and at last obtained through Divine assistance, and that the Princes of Orange had no more contributed to their success than others would have done that had been made generals of the armies, and that they had already had a reward sufficient for their services.' [2]

'The Lords of Holland laboured all they could to divert the other provinces from the thought of advancing his Highness when he should arrive at his eighteenth year. The de Witt party, observing that the Prince grew daily more and more in favour with the people, and that he gave great hopes that he would one day be as great an instrument for the preservation and for the defence and peace of his country as his glorious ancestors

[1] *Historical Remarks upon the late Revolutions*, 1675, 31.
[2] *Ibid.* 33.

had been, resolved to make an Act among themselves for the utter abolishment of the stadtholdership in Holland.'[1]

We have seen that John de Witt had depicted the peace of 1667 as a glorious triumph of the Netherlands which was due to his personal ability and skill; we have seen that the people were jubilant at the cessation of hostilities, and that they were made to believe that de Witt had saved the country from a still greater disaster. The opportunity was too favourable to be allowed to go by unutilised. Desiring to profit from the prestige which he had dishonestly gained, de Witt, immediately after the conclusion of the Peace of Breda of 1667, astutely submitted to the States of Holland a plan for the permanent separation of the vacant stadtholdership from the supreme military command by a perpetual and irrevocable edict which was to destroy for all time the national central authority of the Netherlands, and to secure the permanent and unrestricted supremacy of the party-politicians.[2]

On July 31, 1667, the Peace of Breda was concluded between England and the Netherlands, and five days later, on August 5, the Perpetual Edict was issued, designed, as a contemporary writer put it, 'to suppress the Prince of Orange, of whose parents it must be said that they, after God, have given us this our freedom, and have sealed it with their blood and their wealth.'[3]

The party of national union and the nation were to be deprived of all hope that the country should ever again receive unity and a strong national government. Every individual political unit was to receive full liberty of action, home rule in all affairs. The differences between the individual provinces and the divisions arising from the struggle for power among the unorganised units and among the ambitious politicians, were to be made permanent.

By breaking all bonds of national organisation and discipline, unrestricted liberty of action was given to the ambition of competing politicians and the struggle for power among the individual political units and their leaders became more pronounced and more violent than ever. Everyone fought for himself, the interests of the State were everybody's business, and everybody's

[1] *Historical Remarks upon the late Revolutions*, 1675, 35.
[2] Cerisier, *Histoire des Provinces Unies*, vol. vii. 116.*
[3] *Die Helle Morgenröth*, 1672, 4.

business is nobody's business. 'The provinces became so jealous and so envious of one another that each tried to beggar the other. The towns in every province also tried to ruin each other, and the towns became so envious of the villages that, had they been able to ruin the peasantry, they would have done so.'[1] In military matters also the policy of home rule, the policy of administrative anarchy, was introduced. 'The States took upon them finally and absolutely to nominate their magistrates and their several officers, and in all matters pretended to be so many petty sovereigns within themselves. The States of the provinces disposed of those places and employments that belonged to them, and particularly of the command of the troops; they paid and issued all the orders that concerned them, the States of every province being so many generals of the forces they entertained. This first begat great divisions and misunderstandings between the cities, which many times broke out into public quarrels, and the State generally suffered when its forces came to be governed by many heads without any order or discipline.'[2]

In 1650 the province of Holland had, against the will of the generality, disbanded part of the national troops, as has been shown in Chapter XII.; in 1665 all the English and Scotch troops which had been in the United Provinces since the time of Queen Elizabeth, and which had won innumerable victories under the Princes of Orange, were dismissed; in 1668 the French troops were dismissed; in 1669, when war with France was impending, Holland disbanded a number of troops against the will of the generality. At a time when the news received from France, England and Sweden was most alarming, and clearly foreshadowed an attack upon the Netherlands by France and England combined, Holland further weakened the insufficiently strong army without regard to safety and against the will of the other provinces.

Although it was clear to all that the Netherlands would have to fight a world in arms, nothing could be done in time to prepare against the approaching danger because, since the stadtholderate has been destroyed, there was no national authority empowered to act. While the provinces and parties were publicly

[1] *Die Helle Morgenröth*, 1672, 4.

[2] *Historical Remarks upon the late Revolutions*, 1675, 46.

arguing and intriguing against each other, treating the question of preparing the Netherlands against the approaching attack as a party matter, the enemy was arming. Discussion about strengthening the Netherlands against the approaching attack was interminable, but 'lack of union prevented the Government taking the necessary precautions,'[1] and 'the discussions as to the defensive measures to be taken were continued until at last in 1672 the storm burst over the United Provinces.'[2]

'So zealous were some lords in Holland for preserving the liberties of their country, that rather than have the Prince of Orange captain-general they would endanger its falling into the hands of its enemies. So strangely did private passions overrule the public good. When the other provinces saw themselves threatened in earnest with a war from France, they proposed and earnestly pressed in the Assembly of the States-General that the Prince of Orange should be made commander of the forces. Holland only opposed, and four months passed before anything could be finally resolved upon. So much time was spent in disputes and quarrelling which ought to have been employed in making provision for the security of the State; and at last when Holland was brought to consent, they so limited his Highness's authority that it was not in his power to do what the service of the State called for, because the deputies rather commanded the army than his Highness, who had only the name and title, but they the power, in things which they perhaps little understood.'[3]

The questions of making preparations for defence and of appointing a commander-in-chief were made counters in the party game. Hence, the English Secretary of State wrote to his ambassador in Spain: 'We see the appearance of the greatest distractions in the Dutch government that ever befell it, and these are occasioned not only from the terror they are in from France, but the intrigues for and against the Prince. Six of the provinces, and consequently the States-General, are for electing him captain *ad vitam*; but the States of Holland are as unanimous in choosing him only for this expedition, and with such a limited condition and instruction that his friends will not

[1] Cerisier, *Histoire des Provinces Unies*, vol. vii. 191.* [2] *Ibid.* 204.*
[3] *Historical Remarks upon the late Revolutions*, 1675, 66.

advise him to accept of. This must have a present issue, but their apprehensions from abroad will not so quickly cease; for beside the terrible force that threatens them from France, their preparations of all kinds are so retarded that many think that M. de Witt suffers them to be so that he may therefore enforce their agreement or rather submission to France. In a word, he sees the war drive the promotion of the Prince so strongly on that he cares not what peace he makes, since he can justify their own unreadiness as well as the desertion of their allies, none of which do yet avowedly take their part.'[1] A week later the English Secretary of State wrote, 'The strife yet continues in great warmth at The Hague concerning the election of the Prince of Orange, his best friends persuading him to refuse the commission with limitations as the States of Holland would give it in hopes of his having it at large as the States-General are inclined.'[2] The absence of a national authority empowered to direct the whole forces of the nation kept the Netherlands disarmed and helpless, an object of ridicule and of pity to foreign nations, while the enemy was approaching the frontier.

The post of commander-in-chief had been vacant during thirteen years, that of master-general of ordnance had been vacant during four years. The staff of the army was composed of officers who were jealous of, and intrigued against, one another. In 1671 the Dutch army was raised from 31,600 to 37,155 men. This number was ridiculously inadequate, especially as a large part of these troops existed only on paper, and de Witt told the French ambassador that, if his advice had been followed, more extensive preparations would have been made; that there ought to be 100,000 men to occupy all the forty-five towns of the frontier and to provide a field force.[3]

Misplaced and ill-timed economy militated against military efficiency. De Witt wrote to van Beuningen in England: 'I agree with you that the increase of the army and fleet is not only desirable for preserving the honour of the State, but also because such an increase may prevent a fresh war. I shall use all the means in my power to set forth the utility and necessity

[1] Lord Arlington to Lord Sunderland, January 18, 1672.
[2] *Ibid.* January 25, 1672.
[3] Lefèvre-Pontalis, *De Witt*, 1885, vol. ii. 183

of such a measure.' However, these words could not be translated into action, as there was no national authority and as the contending politicians could not agree. De Witt wrote: 'The conviction is forced upon me that their High Mightinesses will never in time of peace take a definite resolution, from fear of a rupture, and will not make any sacrifice of money before the event. It is the character of the Dutch never to spend money for the defence of their country unless danger is staring them in the face. They are liberal to profusion when they ought to be sparing and are often economical to avarice when they ought to spend their money freely.'[1]

Peace and economy was the watchword of the Dutch politicians and the sum and substance of their statesmanship. Therefore de Witt wrote to Ambassador de Groot: 'The attainment of the last peace has cost millions to the republic and lamentations about the pressure of taxation may be heard on all sides. Therefore it is easy to understand that the deliberations of the States must turn upon the reduction of the army, so that economies may be made in that direction.'[2] If a politician should at a meeting of citizens propose to abolish the local fire-brigade for the sake of economy, he would be thought to be insane, but as voters do not see with their bodily eyes that a strong army is as necessary to a nation as an efficient fire-brigade is to a town, or a solid roof to a valuable house, unscrupulous politicians, desiring to ingratiate themselves with the ignorant masses, and relying on their ability to deceive, have always agitated in democratic States against making even the most necessary provisions for national defence.

Since the time when the party politicians had begun to manage the army with a view to promoting their own interests and those of their party, nearly all the experienced officers who had fought under the Prince of Orange had been dismissed, and many of these had entered the service of France.[3] They had been replaced by men belonging to the burgher aristocracy who owed their appointment to party patronage and few of these were fit to command. Comte de Guiche relates in his Memoirs that in the war against the bishop of Münster in 1665 an

[1] Lefèvre-Pontalis, *De Witt*, 1885, vol. ii. 136. [2] *Ibid.* 172.
[3] Cerisier, *Histoire des Provinces Unies*, vol. vii. 223.*

advance guard of cavalry ordered out at eight o'clock in the evening could be got together only at daybreak of the following day, and that a colonel ordered to advance kept the general waiting during more than two hours because he had just received a letter from his wife and wished to answer it before executing the order he had received. Opposing militarism, the politicians had destroyed the spirit and the discipline of the army and had made it a costly sham.

Diplomats may deceive and dissemble and act in secret; but the warlike intentions of a nation cannot easily be hidden, because a great military expedition requires great preparations. An army, like a snake, walks on its belly. Soldiers may be transferred with comparative ease from one frontier to another, but the enormous magazines wanted in a campaign can hardly be moved, especially if transport is effected only by men and horses. Before a great army can advance, vast quantities of stores have to be accumulated. Hence the establishment of large magazines filled with easily perishable provisions for immediate consumption unmistakeably indicates the warlike intentions of a country.

The King of France had given the Netherlands the amplest warning of his attack by his words addressed to the Dutch ambassador, by his military preparations throughout the country, which were of unparalleled magnitude, and by the erection of several magazines of unprecedented size in various towns on the road towards the Netherlands, and in Neuss, a town belonging to the archbishop of Cologne, which was situated on the very frontier of the Dutch republic. The magazine at Neuss was by an expert witness declared to be the largest ever seen, and to contain provisions and ammunition sufficient for 200,000 or 300,000 men.[1]

The Dutch were governed by a number of contending politicians who were occupied chiefly in debating, in advancing their own interests, and in thwarting their opponents. Had they possessed a national government standing above the parties, with a statesman, such as the Prince of Orange, at its head, they would have asked France for an explanation of these most extraordinary preparations, and, failing to receive a satisfactory reply,

[1] *The Dutch Remonstrance concerning John de Witt*, 1672, 4.

they would immediately have seized and destroyed the huge magazine at Neuss. The best defence is the attack. A State threatened by an enemy should not wait till the first shot is fired, and, in order to demonstrate its peacefulness to the world, offer itself, like an inanimate target, to be shot at at will. Had the Dutch destroyed the magazine at Neuss, the French plan of invasion would have been foiled or have been delayed for at least a year. Proposals to act in this manner were actually put before the many-headed government of the Dutch. However, as the politicians could not agree, nothing was done. Knowing that no initiative was to be expected from the cumbrous Dutch government, the French did not fear disturbance in their preparations.

A democratic government can, owing to the power of obstruction possessed by the opposition, even at the most perilous moment, rarely act with timely energy, and is condemned to look on while the enemy prepares everything and chooses the most suitable moment for an attack. It acts towards the enemy as a mouse when fascinated by a snake.

In democratic, commercial States the navy is as a rule more efficient than the army, because, from the point of view of the politician, who is apt to confuse the privileges of his class with the liberty of the nation, 'the navy is an army from which, however strong and powerful, no danger can be apprehended to liberty.'[1] The oligarchic rulers of democracies favour mercenary armies and oppose the creation of a national army because they fear that an armed nation might diminish their own privileges, often miscalled liberty. In Paley's words, 'It appears doubtful whether any government can be long secure where the people are acquainted with the use of arms.'[2] Oligarchical politicians, though they are fond of asserting that they trust the people, distrust it, and disarm it in order to ensure their supremacy. Hence Phœnicia, Carthage, Athens, Venice, Genoa, and many other oligarchic republics had powerful fleets for the defence of their trade, but they relied for their defence by land on weak, inefficient and very costly mercenary armies. The sovereign people in all these republics was disarmed in order to maintain it

[1] Blackstone, *Laws of England*, book i. chap. xiii.

[2] Paley, *Moral and Political Philosophy*, book vi. chap. xii.

in subjection to the politicians. The same policy was followed in the Netherlands.

Although the hostility and the warlike preparations of France had made it clear that the next great war of the Dutch would be a war on land, 'those ministers who had the direction of affairs bent their chief application to the strength and order rather of their fleet than of their army, being perhaps content that some ill-success should attend the Prince of Orange at his first entrance upon the command of the armies which would contribute to their design of restraining the authority of the captain-general. This plan was not likely to fail considering the ill-constitution of their old army, the hasty levies of their new, and the height of the factions now broken out in the State which left both the towns and the troops in suspense under whose banners they fought and by whose order they were governed, the Prince's or the State's.'[1]

It is a matter of course that the military power should receive its general direction from the civil power, but it should be subordinated to the nation or its non-party representative, a king or a president, and not to a party which will make it a party prop or a party tool and use it chiefly for party purposes. Military efficiency and party government, as practised at present in various democracies, are incompatible with one another. A national army requires a national chief.

The power of a nation depends much less on the warlike paraphernalia and on the spectacular apparatus of military strength, guns, uniforms, army corps, horses, numerous soldiers, generals, &c. than on the strength, unity and spirit of the nation. 'No nation, not even the very smallest, can be utterly defeated unless its strength be spent in its own dissensions.'[2] A nation cannot be strong if it is divided against itself, and a State ruled by party government is always divided against itself. In such a State every war is treated as a party war, not a national war, by the party in opposition. Hence one-half of a democratic nation habitually favours, encourages and supports the enemy. A nation ruled by party governments can oppose only a part of its strength to the whole strength of its opponent.

[1] Sir William Temple, *United Provinces*, 1672, chap. viii.**

[2] Vegetius, *Epitoma*, book iii. chap. x.

Divide et impera' was the maxim with which Rome conquered the world. 'A wise statesman sows the seeds of discord among his enemies.'[1] 'Foreign nations which wished to take advantage of the Netherlands habitually made use of their dissensions through their emissaries.'[2] 'Every enemy of the republic strove to sow in the Netherlands themselves the seeds of vengeance and destruction.'[3] 'France and England fomented the dissensions of the two parties by which the Netherlands were torn, dissensions which acted like a powerful dissolvent upon the body politic.'[4]

The United Netherlands were in 1672 not only surrounded by enemies abroad, but likewise threatened by enemies at home. John de Witt could rely not even on the whole-hearted support of his followers, and he had to devote most of his time to settling quarrels and combating treason within his own party when his full attention ought to have been concentrated upon the defence of his country. On June 17, 1670, Sir William Temple reported to Lord Arlington, 'Monsieur de Witt returned yesterday to town after fifteen days' absence at Groningen composing some differences in that province. There is a violent humour runs against him of late in the town of Amsterdam upon pretext of his growing too far into the sway of all affairs in this State by so long administering and by advancing his friends into offices and places of trust with too much industry. But I suppose at the bottom of this is a design in the leaders to effect a change so that those who have been long in office may make room for those who have been long out of it.' By the force of circumstances John de Witt and his followers had to fight for themselves when they ought to have been fighting for their country. That is the curse of party government.

In 1670 France had at least 21,000,000 inhabitants[5] while the United Provinces had only about 3,500,000, and France was allied to England. It was therefore absolutely necessary that the Netherlands should not stand alone in the coming struggle.

[1] Vegetius, *Epitoma*, book iii. chap. x.
[2] Janiçon, *Etat présent des Provinces Unies*, 1755, vol. i. 88.
[3] Cerisier, *Histoire des Provinces Unies*, vol. vii. 154.*
[4] Martin, *Histoire de France*, 1878, vol. xiii. 361.*
[5] Sismondi, *Histoire des Français*, 1821, vol. xxv. 225.*

It is true that de Witt, when considering the possibility of a war with France, had relied for safety on the balance of power in Europe, which means on the help of other nations. However, de Witt was too preoccupied with party politics to make definite arrangements with foreign Powers.

The politicians could not arrive in time at an agreement as to the preventive measures to be taken, and therefore resigned themselves not only in military but in diplomatic matters also to a policy of drift, aimlessly following the lead of secretly hostile England, their ostensible ally. 'They are not capable of any vigorous resolution,' reported the English ambassador from The Hague, 'and are waiting for an inspiration from the King of England, and unless they receive that inspiration, they are resolved to leave matters to Providence and to see the French at the gates of the republic, without making a move.'[1]

Machiavelli, whose works were widely read in the Netherlands, had taught: 'The history of all times proves that governments violate those treaty engagements into which they have been forced as soon as they have a favourable opportunity for doing so, and that they break engagements into which they have voluntarily entered as soon as the circumstances under which the treaty was concluded have changed.'[2] The great Dutchman Spinoza, a contemporary of de Witt, had taught: 'A treaty between nations remains in force as long as the occasions which led to the conclusion of the treaty remain.' England was the chief competitor of the Netherlands. Within fifteen years she had twice attacked the Dutch, and she had, except for signing a make-believe treaty, shown them unrelenting hostility. Nevertheless the Dutch statesmen leaned on England, professed to trust her, and followed her lead.

De Witt knew from his ambassadors that England had been won over by France, but as his party-political preoccupations did not enable him to act in military or diplomatic matters with the necessary celerity and vigour, he affected reliance for the safety of his country upon those treaty promises which he knew England had secretly repudiated and would not keep. De Witt followed England's political lead against his own judgment

[1] Sir William Temple to Arlington, September 2, 1670.

[2] Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, book ii. chap. xlii.

because in a democracy the statesman who is nominally at the helm cannot lead, but has to follow the line of least resistance. Like gamblers, the Dutch politicians relied for the safety of their country on their luck and on chance. 'They thought that at the worst whenever the pinch came they could not fail of a safe bargain in one market or other, having so vast a treasure ready to employ upon any good occasion. Hence they reckoned upon the assistance of Sweden and the neighbouring princes of Germany without making them sure by subsidiary advances before the war began.'[1]

During a number of years Louis XIV. had concentrated all his energies upon making diplomatic arrangements with all the principal Powers of Europe devised to isolate the republic from all sympathy or aid.[2] All the measures which human ambition and prudence could suggest and foresight prepare for the destruction of the Dutch had been taken, but statesmanlike foresight and common sense might have provided an effective counter-measure.

A great diplomatist taught: 'When the excessive aggrandisement of one Power threatens to break all bounds and to overwhelm all others, it is wise to oppose barriers to its encroachments as long as there is time to stay its progress and as long as it is manageable. When clouds are seen to gather, and lightning announces the approaching storm, the sovereign who is unable to contend against it alone will, if he is wise, unite himself with all those who are menaced by the same common danger, for their interests are identical.'[3] The Dutch should have opposed a coalition of the other European Powers to the hostile coalition of Louis XIV., but they were unable to make the necessary diplomatic arrangements in time, partly because their government had many heads but no head, partly because the policy of disintegration and disorganisation followed by the party in power had led to the disorganisation of all public services, including the diplomatic service.

The Dutch ambassadors in foreign countries had to adapt their activity to the momentary party-political requirement of

[1] Sir William Temple, *United Provinces*, chap. viii.**

[2] Mignet, *Négociations relatives à la Succession d'Espagne*, 1836.**

[3] Frederick the Great, *Anti-Machiavel*, chap. xxvi.

the politicians in power and to play, in the interest of the ruling set, to the popular gallery in the Netherlands instead of defending the interests of the State. Besides, a misplaced economy in the expenditure of secret service money, which was grudged under the pretext of virtue, had caused the Dutch diplomatic service to be the worst informed in the world. Ambassador de Groot complained, 'This wretched virtue of economy which Holland desires to practise is no doubt very proper, but it is not well timed, and it is suitable only to those who can stand alone and need no help from others. France is much wiser. She spends money on all sides, and she buys over those whose support she needs.'[1] Another ambassador wrote, 'The States of the United Provinces do not afford their ministers the necessary funds. I could give examples where an expenditure of 50,000 crowns would have saved millions to the country.[2] Lacking direction by a national statesman, hampered with party-political millstones and wanting the necessary means, the activity of the Dutch ambassadors was misspent in writing lengthy but perfectly useless despatches and reports 'which frequently take up not only quires but whole reams of paper and which only serve to fill the archives with monstrous and useless accumulations.'[3] These voluminous reports and despatches were very suitable for publication in blue-book form with a view to imposing upon the simple, but useless for the furtherance of diplomatic business.

An English ambassador, Sir H. Wotton, wittily, but not quite justly, said, 'An ambassador is an honest man sent abroad to lie for the good of the commonwealth.' One of the greatest diplomats of modern times also not quite justly wrote, 'Ambassadors at foreign courts are privileged spies who watch the conduct of the sovereigns at whose court they are accredited.'[4] Ambassadors are like commercial travellers. They have certain innocent representative and social duties to perform, but their chief function is to push with all their might the political business of their own nation, and to watch, search out and report on, the business of its competitors. Therefore they act to some extent as honourable spies at the courts to which they are

[1] Lefèvre-Pontalis, *De Witt*, 1885, vol. ii. 137.
[2] Wicquefort, *Embassador*, 1716, 356. [3] *Ibid.* 414.
[4] Frederick the Great, *Anti-Machiavel*, chap. xxvi.

accredited. Unfortunately, the Dutch ambassadors owed their position not to their ability but to party-political patronage. Giving bad directions and having bad representatives, the Dutch government was very badly informed on the attitude and plans of foreign countries. Ambassador Boreel, in London, constantly reported that there was no danger threatening from England, either because he was simple enough to believe it or because he thought that that information would be useful to de Witt, who affected to believe that England would assist the Netherlands against France.

The Dutch ship of State was rudderless. It drifted wherever the currents of the moment and the tide of chance would drive it, and inaction was defended by the men in power by a systematic policy of deception. However, the responsibility for this deplorable state of affairs lay less with the governing individuals than with the system by which the Netherlands were governed. Evils similar to those described in the foregoing are always found in democracies disorganised and ruled by party leaders. The Dutch constitution, which had been devised by the politicians, and which was perfect from their own point of view because it gave them the utmost latitude, was most imperfect from the national point of view. 'The Dutch constitution, like the old constitution of Poland, being mainly constructed with the object of opposing obstacles to the encroachments of the central power, had left the country wholly incapable in times of danger. No augmentation of the military or naval forces, no serious measure of defence, could be effected.'[1] 'By their very organisation and constitution, secrecy in council, rapidity in decision, and promptitude in action were impossible. The unhappy division of the republic in two parties which were jealous of one another and which tried to find opportunities for thwarting one another added to the grave drawback that all deliberations were conducted in public, that decision could be arrived at only after lengthy delay and that all measures proposed by one party inevitably were unconditionally opposed by the other party.'[2]

Other countries could conduct their policy with the necessary secrecy and dispatch. The many-headed, disorganised, slowly-

[1] Lecky, *History of England*, 1883, vol. vi. chap. xxii.*

[2] Sismondi, *Histoire des Français*, 1821, vol. xxv. 226.

acting and imperfectly informed government of the Netherlands was compelled to think aloud, with its enemies for an audience. 'You cannot take a secret resolution, how important soever the object may be, without it becoming immediately known in France,' wrote the Dutch ambassador to De Witt.[1] The Dutch government could explain away awkward facts to the politicians assembled in the States-General and it could by skilful or daring misrepresentation throw dust in the eyes of the people. Dutch statesmen could deceive the nation, but not its enemies. Therefore the enemies of the Netherlands were better informed on Dutch affairs, and especially upon the military unpreparedness of the Netherlands, than were the Dutch themselves. 'At the French Court they know better than in the Netherlands how badly our frontiers are defended,' wrote Ambassador de Groot on January 11, 1672.

While the enemy was at the gates of the Republic the politicians were quarrelling among themselves. 'The deputies could not agree on the question of levying the money required for the war, there were terrible quarrels on the appointment of a commander-in-chief, and so much time was wasted in these disputes that the enrolling of fresh troops was begun only when it was too late and when no time was left to ensure the security of the Dutch fortresses.'[2]

Twenty years of party government, of the absolute supremacy of the politicians, and of Home Rule all round had sapped the Dutch commonwealth of its strength and of its formerly so vigorous spirit. 'The Netherlands were still a great body, but they were without a soul. They were a State, but it was a State of disunited provinces. Their towns were without order, their burghers without obedience, their soldiers without discipline, and all without heart, whereas in all sieges the hearts of men defend the walls and not the walls the men.'[3] Such was the pitiful state of the Netherlands when the greatest military Power in Europe was about to attack them.

[1] Boreel to De Witt, August 30, 1662.

[2] Brandt, *Vie de de Ruyter*, 1698, 457.

[3] Sir Wm. Temple, *United Provinces*, 1672, chap. viii.**

CHAPTER XIX

THE NETHERLANDS ARE ATTACKED BY ENGLAND AND INVADED BY FRANCE. THEY UTTERLY COLLAPSE, THEY ARE SAVED BY FOREIGN COUNTRIES, AND THEY SINK TO THE RANK OF A SECOND-RATE POWER

'Athens having been raised by the ability of Themistocles to the greatest height of power and glory, shortly afterwards sank into weakness and disgrace. The cause of this sudden change lay in the inappropriate constitution of the government, for the Athenian State was like a ship without a captain.'—POLYBIUS, *History*, book vi. iii.

'The Venetians attributed their prosperity solely to their own bravery and wisdom, but they did so without cause. When fortune deserted them, they lost in a moment all their possessions, and they became so dispirited that they unconditionally surrendered to the Emperor and prayed the Pope for mercy. In four days their republic collapsed. At one stroke they lost their power and their courage. Their humiliation was caused by the disorder of their military organisation. All nations which are governed as the Venetians were governed will have a similar fate. They will be insolent in prosperity and desperate in adversity. A good militia is the foundation of every State. If a State follows the example of the ancient Romans, exercises and disciplines its citizens in times of peace, accustoms them to endurance and prepares them for war, it will triumph over all vicissitudes and adversity. But if a nation neglects arms and relies for defence on its luck instead of on its own strength, it will share the fate of the Venetians.'—MACHIAVELLI, *Discorsi*, book iii. chap. xxxi.

'For empire and greatness it importeth most that a nation do profess arms as their principal honour, study and occupation.'—BACON, *Of the True Greatness of Kingdoms and Estates*.

'No State can be said to stand upon a steady foundation except those whose strength is in their own soldiery and the body of their own people. Such as serve for wages often betray their masters in distress, and always want the courage and industry which is found in those who fight for their own interests and are to have a part in the victory. The business of mercenaries is so to perform their duty so as to keep their employment and to draw profit from it, but that is not enough to support the spirit of men

in extreme danger. The shepherd who is a hireling flies when the thief comes.'—Sir ALGERNON SIDNEY, *On Government*, chap. ii. 21.

'Against attacks from abroad fortresses are unnecessary in those States which have a good army, and they are useless in those States which have not a good army, for a good army is a sufficient defence in itself and requires no fortresses, while fortresses without a good army cannot be held.'—MACHIAVELLI, *Discorsi*, book ii. chap. xxiv.

THE way in which before 1672 an attack upon the Netherlands was arranged between France and England is most interesting, because it shows that historical fact is often stranger than fiction, and that the most unlikely events are apt to occur in foreign politics.

Princess Henrietta, the sister of Charles II., had married the Duke of Orleans, brother of Louis XIV., and Louis XIV. resolved to make use of the Princess, who was greatly beloved by her brother, for detaching England from her alliance with the Netherlands,[1] and attaching her to France. With this object in view, in 1670, he sent the Princess on a diplomatic mission to Charles II., who was at Dover, and, in order to make sure that she should succeed, Louis worked not only on Charles's brotherly affection, but also on his cupidity and his lust, knowing that he was pleasure-loving, sensual, indolent and weak. The English ministers had already been bribed and suborned by Colbert, as has been shown on page 348. Charles II., who was in chronic want of money, was also to be bought over with French gold, and the conquest of the King was to be completed, and to be permanently retained, by the seducing arts of a clever French mistress. Therefore Louis asked Princess Henrietta to hand over to her brother a very beautiful Frenchwoman, Louise Renée de Keroualle, or Querouaille, who was to accompany Princess Henrietta nominally as a maid-of-honour, and who was to offer herself to Charles, to become his mistress and to act as a secret diplomatic agent to France. To ensure Mdlle. de Kerouälle's willingness and loyalty, the King had corrupted her with large sums of money, he had settled an estate on her, he had made in advance ample provisions for every child which she might have by Charles II., and had paid large sums to her family as a compensation.[2]

[1] See page 344. [2] Michelet, *Histoire de France*, vol. xv. 144.*

Mdlle. de Keroualle was eighteen years old and had, according to Evelyn's Diary, 'a childish, simple baby face.' She became maid-of-honour to Queen Catherine of England, and the King's mistress. According to Bishop Burnet and other contemporary witnesses, she served France well and faithfully. She was made Duchess of Portsmouth, and she had a son by the King, who became Duke of Richmond.

The persuasion of his sister, the allurements of his charming French mistress, and the huge sums of money offered to him quickly won over the will of the easily corruptible monarch, and a secret treaty was signed at Dover according to which Charles II. was to receive from Louis XIV. £200,000 a year and the assistance of 6,000 French troops, while he, on the other hand, was to place the forces of England at the disposal of the French King and to support the policy of France on the Continent. The full text of this extraordinary treaty may be found in Lingard's History. By this treaty Charles II. bound himself to defend the claim of Louis XIV. upon the Crown of Spain, and thus encouraged him to take possession of Spain, of the Spanish Netherlands, of Southern Italy, and of the rich Spanish colonies. Had the insane policy of Charles II. succeeded, France would have become the mistress of the Continent of Europe, of the sea, and of the colonial world, and England would have sunk to insignificance,[1] but Providence willed that William III. of Orange was to save England and Europe from the dominion of France.

'Princess Henrietta returned to France proud of the success of her diplomatic mission, but the journey proved fatal to her. The Duke of Orleans had heard such things of her behaviour that it was said he ordered a large dose of sublimate to be given to her in a glass of succory-water, of which she died a few hours afterwards in great torments, and when she was opened, her stomach was all ulcerated.'[2] According to St.-Simon's Mémoires also the Duchess was poisoned, and the circumstantial account of her friend and companion, Comtesse de la Fayette,[3] seems to confirm Burnet. The correspondence between Charles II. and the Duchess of

[1] Philippson, *Zeitalter Ludwigs des Vierzehnten*, 1879, 94.
[2] Burnet, *History of his Own Time*, 1724, vol. i. 168.
[3] *Histoire de Madame Henriette*, 1779.

Orleans, which is of great psychological interest, may be found in Sir J. Dalrymple's Memoirs.

The poisoning of his beloved sister did not lead to a rupture between Louis XIV. and Charles II., as Louis had feared. Charles II. found an easy consolation in a life of pleasure and of dissipation paid for by France. The secret alliance remained intact.

The foregoing illustrates the fact that the foreign policy of nations is not exclusively directed in accordance with their interests. In monarchical, and also in democratic, States foreign policy depends largely on the ambitions, the fancies and the passions of the leading men and of the masses. It is perhaps more often directed by the heart than by the head, more often by impulse than by logic. Hence one must be acquainted, not only with the interests and aims of the various States, but also with the character, inclinations, and passions of the people and their leaders, in order to be able to gauge the probable development of foreign politics.

As soon as France began to invade the Netherlands, the terrified Dutch politicians, who had talked very bravely, but who had neglected to take the most elementary military and diplomatic precautions, humbly asked for peace. On January 4, 1672, Ambassador de Groot handed to Louis XIV. a letter of supplication and submission sent by the States-General, and verbally implored the King not to make war upon the Netherlands. He stated to Louis that the United Provinces would do everything he might demand, and said that his acceptance of their voluntary humble submission would increase his glory far more than victories won by shedding much blood and wasting much treasure. He entreated the King not to treat the Netherlands worse than criminals, and not to condemn them without a hearing.

This abject and cowardly surrender at the first sign of war by men who, but a few years ago, had bragged that the Netherlands were impregnable and that the Dutch were the arbiters of Europe,[1] was treated with contempt by Louis XIV., and he replied on January 6 to the States-General that 'he was pleased to find in their letter a recognition of the services which France had rendered to the Dutch in the past, but that he wished that

See page 345 f.

the Dutch had not forgotten their obligations to France ever since he came to the throne.[1] Two days later, on January 8, Ambassador de Groot reported that France was preparing a fleet of sixty ships and an army of 200,000 men.

Louis had not forgotten the treachery with which the Dutch had made peace with Spain in 1648, deserting France and depriving her of the Spanish Netherlands.[2] This may be seen from his declaration of war, in which the King stated that he could no longer conceal his indignation at the conduct of the Dutch, who showed so little appreciation of the great benefits which he and his predecessors had heaped upon the Netherlands,[3] and from a private memoir, in which he wrote: 'The cause and origin of the present war lie in the ingratitude, the insults, and the insupportable vanity of the Dutch. Everyone knows that these people owe the establishment of the republic to the protection of my predecessors, and that, but for the subsidies and troops of France, the Netherlands would have disappeared. Yet the Dutch have never shown to France any recognition, but have openly and secretly done everything in their power to hamper our progress.'[4] A 'profitable' policy, such as that which was followed by the Netherlands in and before 1648 towards France, is often exceedingly unprofitable.

The attitude of England was threatening and mysterious. Before the outbreak of the war many Dutchmen thought that the King of England adopted a hostile attitude to their country, either in order to extort money from them by intimidation, or in order to force them to elevate his nephew, the Prince of Orange, to the stadtholderate. Besides, Sir George Downing, the British ambassador at The Hague, had made to the States many professions of good-will in the King's name, and had spoken to them in a tone of sincerity of the friendship of allied England. Furthermore, it was contrary to the political interests of England to see the Netherlands crushed by France, who, in possession of the Dutch coast, could threaten the safety of England. Lastly, an English attack upon the Netherlands

[1] Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book lii. chap. xxiv.*

[2] See Chap. XI. of this work.

[3] Sismondi, *Histoire des Français*, 1821, vol. xxv. 233.*

[4] *Mémoire Inédit de Louis XIV.*, Rousset Louvois, 1862, vol. i.*

seemed so incompatible with justice, equity, and treaty faith, that no man could believe that Charles II. would make war upon the Dutch till the first blow was actually struck.

Charles II. had become a paid servant and supporter of Louis XIV. Nevertheless, he would have been unable to make war upon the Netherlands, had not the English nation been hostile to the Dutch. The hostility with which the English people of all classes contemplated the Netherlands arose from the same motives which had kindled the first and second Anglo-Dutch wars. England wished to wrest wealth and maritime power, trade, ships, and colonies from the Dutch. The sentiments of England were expressed by the Lord Chancellor, the Earl of Shaftesbury, in a celebrated speech made in parliament, in which he said: 'The Kings of England and of France, knowing their interest, have joined against those who are the common enemies to all monarchies, and especially to ours, their only competitor for trade and sea-power, who alone stand in their way to a universal empire as great as that of Rome. *Delenda est Carthago.* That government must be brought down. The States of Holland are England's eternal enemies both by interest and inclination.'[1] In a pamphlet entitled 'Delenda Carthago, or, The True Interests of England in Relation to France and Holland,' which may be found in the Somers Collection, we read: 'It is interest that governs kingdoms. Nations do not fall in love with one another, as private persons do, for their beauty. The public still moves by interest, and that will never lie. The vital interest of Holland, as all the world knows, is trade. Trade is advantageous to other nations, but necessary to them. Their territory cannot make them live. Therefore whoever rivals their trade must be an irreconcilable enemy to them. England has been their only mighty rival for the trade of the world.'[2] The Anglo-Dutch war for commercial and maritime supremacy had to be fought to a finish. Trade jealousy was the motive of the third Anglo-Dutch war, on the part of the English nation.

As a legitimate cause of war was wanting, a pretext for war had to be created. In July 1671, Sir William Temple, the English ambassador in the Netherlands, and his wife, were

[1] Rapin, *History*, 1733, vol. ii. 666. [2] *Somers Collection*, 1809, vol. iii. 38.

leaving the Netherlands for England. A yacht was sent over to fetch them home, and the captain 'had orders given to him, if he came in sight of the Dutch fleet, to sail through them, and shoot at those ships which were next to him, till he made them strike sail, or till they shot at him again, and then pursue his course.'[1] The yacht passed through the Dutch fleet, and the captain fired at the Dutch warships in accordance with his instructions, but as the Dutch admiral goodnaturedly asked for an explanation, instead of replying with his guns, this incident could not be magnified by England into a hostile act and a cause for war. However, 'the Dutch ministers at Court, as ill-noses as they have, began to smell the powder after the captain's shooting,' as Sir William Temple quaintly puts it.

Lacking a sufficient pretext for war, England commenced hostilities by a direct act of aggression. In the beginning of March Sir Robert Holmes, the same captain who had opened the second Anglo-Dutch war by attacking the Dutch in peace time,[2] steered towards the rich Smyrna fleet which lay at anchor off the Isle of Wight, and fired a volley into it. The Dutch, being prepared for treachery, answered with a heavy fire; a battle ensued, but the English captured only two ships, suffering heavy loss themselves. 'This was a breach of faith such as even Mahomedans and pirates would have been ashamed of. The unsuccessfulness of it made it appear as ridiculous as it was base.'[3] 'No clap of thunder in a fair frosty day could more astonish the world than our declaration of war against Holland in 1672—first, by matter of fact in falling upon the Smyrna fleet and, in consequence of that, by a formal declaration.'[4] Only on March 29, 1672, was the English declaration of war issued. The French were more punctilious. They began hostilities only after having formally declared war on April 6 of the same year.

A month after the French had declared war the bishop of Münster joined in the war upon the Dutch, on the pretext that they had endeavoured to corrupt the governors of his frontier

[1] Sir William Temple to his father, September 14, 1671.
[2] See page 311.
[3] Burnet, *History of His Own Time*, 1724, vol. i. 171.
[4] Sir William Temple, *Memoirs*, 1750, 379.

places, and the bishop of Cologne also joined in the attack. The two strongest Powers in Europe, together with two minor States, simultaneously attacked the unfortunate Netherlands by land and sea.

Admiral de Ruyter, the greatest admiral of the Dutch, and one of the ablest seamen known to history, had so greatly improved the Dutch fleet that it was considered strong enough to defeat the English navy. To secure the glory of a victory to the politicians, not to the admiral, John de Witt had his brother Cornelius appointed 'deputy plenipotentiary of the fleet.' De Ruyter was to be only second in command, and the orders to the fleet were signed in the first place by Cornelius de Witt and in the second place by de Ruyter.

De Ruyter's plans were crippled through the lack of a national admiralty. The authorities of the United Provinces, knowing that the French fleet at Brest was to join the English in the Thames, made great exertions to fit out their squadrons so as to attack the latter before the junction was effected, but the wretched lack of centralisation in the naval administration—there were still five separate navy boards—caused this project to fail. The province of Zeeland was so backward that its contingent, a large fraction of the whole, was not ready in time.[1]

The sea air did not agree with Cornelius de Witt. At the battle of Solebay, which was fought on May 28, 1672, he was attacked by rheumatism in the arms and legs and sat, in a magnificent uniform and surrounded by twelve halberdiers, on a chair, under a canopy, as on a throne, close to de Ruyter, to direct the battle. After the battle, which, though undecided, was glorious to the Dutch, who fought against superior numbers, the States of Holland wrote to Cornelius de Witt: 'We have learned with extreme satisfaction of the admirable manner in which you have made use of the vessels of the States for the purpose of fighting the hostile fleets. We express to you our praise by this letter, and we pray you to continue in the same path for the good of the country.'[2] Had the battle of Solebay been lost by the Dutch, the politicians would probably have declared (as in Obdam's case) that the defeat was solely due to the admiral's incapacity.[3]

[1] Mahan, *Sea Power*, 1890, 145.

[2] Lefèvre-Pontalis, *De Witt*, 1885, vol. ii. 300.

[3] See page 317.

When the intention of France to attack the Netherlands had become absolutely clear, the Dutch government sought everywhere in Europe for assistance against that country. The Dutch treasury was full of money, but the Netherlands had no soldiers. The troops and the martial spirit of the Netherlands had simultaneously disappeared. The Dutch were proud of the great military exploits of their ancestors, and, having shut their eyes to their decline and to the military progress of the nations around, did not know their own weakness, and considered themselves still a nation of heroes. Besides, they were being deceived by their rulers. Many foreign observers also believed that the Netherlands might, in time of need, resist France as they had resisted Spain. Therefore Madame de Sévigné thought that the French-Dutch war was 'the most dangerous war that had ever been known.'[1] People wondered whether the spirit of the Dutch would rise to the occasion, and whether the Netherlands, when threatened with national annihilation, would fight again with their ancient heroism.

Louis XIV. had made his preparations for the conquest of the Netherlands on a vast scale. The effective strength of the French army when it entered upon the campaign against the Dutch was about 120,000 men, of whom 30,000 were auxiliaries furnished by the bishops of Cologne and Münster and by England. Besides, Louis had raised reserves which increased the strength of his own army to at least 166,000 men.[2] Altogether more than 200,000 men—an army of immense strength for the time—commanded by Condé, Turenne, Luxembourg, and Créqui, the greatest generals of the period, were advancing upon the United Provinces.

The divisions which had torn the republic asunder since the death of William II. in 1650 were now more acute than ever, and they were quite as dangerous to the State as were the mighty armies of their enemies. There were three parties in the Netherlands: the Orange party, the de Witt party, and a third party which had no personal leader, because the men who belonged to it were of opinion that it was derogatory to the dignity of the republic and dangerous to its liberty to have

[1] Letter, April 27, 1672.

[2] Sismondi, *Histoire des Français*, 1821, vol. xxv. 234.*

even a party chief.[1] Insane resistance to authority saw in a chief of State, and even in a party leader, a tyrant, and confounded anarchy with liberty.

The masses of the population turbulently demanded that the young Prince of Orange, who now was twenty-two years old, should be made commander-in-chief. De Witt and his party resisted, but the excitement of the people became so great that de Witt and his followers had at last to give way to the popular will, and to consent that the young Prince should be made commander of the military and naval forces. On February 24, 1672, after many years spent in agitation and many months spent in wearisome discussion about the nomination of a commander-in-chief, at a moment when the French troops were already marching towards the Netherlands, William III. of Orange was made captain and admiral-general.

William III. was not to command in reality, for eight deputies, elected to represent the States-General, were to direct the military and naval forces of the republic. One of these was Cornelius de Witt, who, as we have seen, commanded the fleet. The other seven were to accompany the Prince, and to assist him with their advice in commanding the army.

The Prince, who hitherto had been prevented by the politicians from gaining military experience, suddenly found himself, as the nominal commander, at the head of a practically non-existent army. There were not sufficient troops to form a field-army. There were not even sufficient soldiers to man the fortifications, the strongest in the world, which had been built at enormous expense, and which were to make an invasion by land impossible. In hot haste troops had to be hired in the Dutch slums, in Germany, in Denmark, and in Switzerland. On April 19, the Prince of Orange, accompanied by his masters, the seven deputies of the States, set out to inspect the fortifications and to form an army on the Yssel. A few weeks later, in the course of the month of May, three huge armies invaded the territories of the Dutch republic.

The Dutch frontier fortresses showed the effect of government by party politicians without responsibility and of the commercial spirit which ruled the nation. Lacking an adequate national

[1] Neuville, *Histoire de la Hollande*, 1703, vol. iv. 9.

control, the purveyors of ammunitions of war and the contractors for military supplies, party men supported by the party men in power—*manus manum lavat*—had enriched themselves and robbed the State, and the ruling party leaders had connived at their nefarious proceedings, desiring to prevent the scandal caused by their leaking out and fearing to turn political supporters into opponents. The military magazines were empty and the fortifications had tumbled to ruins.[1] A contemporary writer tells us: 'Most of the fortresses or important places were either very badly fortified or not fortified at all. Others wanted something or other to make them secure. Those that had men had neither trenches nor ammunition, and those which were stored with powder, shot, and other necessaries wanted men. Those places which we knew the enemy would not meddle with were crowded with soldiers who were not needed. A member of the States of Holland, discussing with one of his colleagues the condition of the magazines a short time before the invasion, boasted that the magazines of Holland were so well stocked that they would not require replenishing, even if the war should continue during two years. Now, when it is too late, loud complaints are made that nothing was provided. Those who demanded powder, shot, and ammunitions of war, were directed to magazines which had gradually been emptied, so that there was nothing left.'[2]

Local self-government, the absence of national controlling authorities independent of party politics, the arbitrary rule of amateur politicians, who silenced and suppressed the military experts, the direction of the business of the nation by men who were guided in their military policy not by national but by party considerations, who bartered military matters against votes, who gave generalships as a reward for political support, and other positions of the greatest national responsibility to the highest political or financial bidder, without overmuch regard to his qualifications, and who enforced economy without regard to efficiency, had crippled the professional army and disarmed the country. Perhaps the most trustworthy contemporary witness wrote: 'The stores of ammunition and provisions which the various provinces had to maintain were not provided with fresh material

[1] Sismondi, *Histoire des Français*, 1821, vol. xxv. 231.*

[2] *The Dutch Remonstrance concerning John de Witt*, 1672, 17.

and victuals, on account of economy. The powder which had been in store had partly been expended in salvoes for the deputies and for the personal friends of the governors and commanders; partly it had become bad because, having been too long in store, it had perished by dampness. Fortress guns had fallen from their carriages, the wood-work having rotted away, they had rolled down the embankments, and they had been left lying on the ground where they fell. The best guns had been taken out of the fortresses and had been put on board the fleet.'[1]

Although the military expenditure of the Netherlands was very heavy, nothing was ready, because the civil administration which ruled the military establishment had misapplied and wasted much of the money voted, partly through ignorance, partly through indifference and the prevalence of routine, partly through fraud. We learn from the best contemporary source, 'The sums which the Finance Department had taken from the people would have been more than sufficient to defend the State against all its enemies, to repay all the national debts, and to build up a financial reserve towards the time of war, had the monies voted been laid out economically and wisely, without either waste or miserliness. However, the most experienced officers and soldiers were dismissed for the sake of economy, and immediately afterwards new, inexperienced, and therefore useless, men had to be recruited at far greater expense. As the fortresses and magazines had been neglected, the country stood open to the enemy. While the Netherlands were ignorant of what other States were doing, foreign governments knew all about the Netherlands. When war was impending 8,000 Lüneburg soldiers were refused in order to save a preliminary payment of a few hundred pounds, but other men had to be raised in their place at three or four times the expense.'[2]

The States had allowed themselves to be robbed of their ammunition. Louvois had conceived the audacious plan of purchasing the war material of the republic, and the thirst for gain among the Dutch had enabled him to succeed. 'Although, when the King of France began preparing for war, it was well known that there was scarcely any saltpetre in Europe, except that held by the Dutch East India Company, and although it was offered

[1] Valckenier, *Verwirrtes Europa*, 1677, vol. i. 136.** [2] *Ibid.* 137.**

to the State by that company, yet the State refused the saltpetre, rather desiring that it should be sent to France and serve as a knife to cut the throat of the Netherlands. Besides, instead of publishing edicts to prevent the transport of ammunition to the enemy, the government encouraged the sending of all necessaries of war to the enemy, as may be heard from the mouth of Martin van Juchen, the late governor of Wesel, who now lives at The Hague.

'About four or five months ago his Excellency was advised, in a letter sent by a loyal subject, that four ships laden with powder and shot and other ammunitions of war were coming up the Rhine, and were to pass by Wesel in order to carry those materials into the French magazine at Neuss. Thereupon the governor stopped these vessels, put troops on board, and sent full information to the Council of State, desiring speedy orders how to act in this matter. There was at that time but little powder and shot at Wesel, so that the governor was not a little rejoiced at this incident, hoping that, by this opportunity, the city would be well provided at a small charge to the State, and he ordered that the ships should unload. However, the governor received an order from the Council of State that he should permit these vessels and others to pass freely and without molestation. Two days after passed by another ship that had twice as much ammunition on board as one of the former vessels, and from time to time several others of the same character passed by steering the same course.

'From that time forward the governor solicited the council that the city of Wesel, being so considerable a town on the frontier, and of such great consequence to the State, ought to have 6,000 men in garrison and sufficient trenches and ammunition. This the governor frequently pressed in his letters to the Council of State, and at last he received orders about making entrenchments and equipping the same with everything needful. But, instead of putting a garrison of 6,000 men into the town, the council immediately drew out of it thirteen troops of horse and twelve companies of foot, all stout and able men, and put in a few companies consisting chiefly of inexperienced youths, notwithstanding the frequent protests of the governor. Lastly, to make sure that this considerable city should fall into the enemy's

hands, the Council of State put in another governor, who surrendered Wesel immediately when summoned to do so.'[1]

The Netherlands were overrun by France with lightning-like rapidity. In less than forty days more than forty Dutch cities and eminent fortresses surrendered, practically without resistance. Wesel on the Rhine, which was considered the key to the Netherlands, had, as we have seen, been left defenceless. Three hours after the investment had begun were guns placed on the ramparts, but although powder and shell were plentiful the artillery was of little use because the wooden gun-carriages had completely decayed, the walls had fallen in, and the broken-down palisades and other means for impeding the approach of the enemy had not been renewed.[2] Having been utterly neglected, Wesel which, in the time of the Spanish war, had resisted its besiegers during many months, fell after a siege of a single day.

Utrecht occupied a most important strategical point in the interior of the Netherlands, lying in the midst of a plain which can be put under water, and twenty English miles in front of Amsterdam, which it protects. At the approach of the enemy the States gave orders to place Utrecht in a state of defence; but the self-governing town authorities refused to obey because they would have had to destroy some of their playgrounds, gardens and promenades, and did not care to do so.[3] When the Prince of Orange approached Utrecht with his army, the town authorities would not admit him, and they treated his troops outside the walls like brigands, refusing them admittance and food. Only on the next day was the Prince allowed to enter the town, but he had to leave his soldiers outside. The Prince offered to defend Utrecht, and implored them to think of their country, but his entreaties were wasted. Although a number of fortresses which had not yet been attacked separated Utrecht from the French army, Utrecht sent deputies to Louis XIV., who surrendered the town and reserved it for him until he should take possession of it.[4]

Home Rule and individualism had destroyed all administrative order and all military discipline. Everyone in authority

[1] *The Dutch Remonstrance concerning John de Witt*, 1672, 6.
[2] Neuville, *Histoire de la Hollande*, 1703, vol. iv. 23.*
[3] *Ibid.* 19.* [4] *Ibid.* 51.*

acted as he pleased. The important town of Deventer could easily be defended, but William Nieulant, one of the burgomasters, gave orders to destroy a bridge which was absolutely necessary for its defence, without consulting his colleagues and without obtaining the permission of the military commander. When the enemy approached and threw a few shells into Deventer, the cowardly commander wished to surrender; but, seeing the threatening attitude of the infuriated populace, which asked to be led against the enemy, a sortie was made, during which Nieulant passed to the besiegers a letter in which he asked, on behalf of the town, for an armistice in order to consult about surrendering with the towns of Kampen and Zwolle, with which Deventer possessed a separate treaty of union. Shortly afterwards the town was surrendered by the combined action of the magistrates and of some of the officers, against the will of the citizens and the soldiers.

Schenk, on the Rhine, was very strongly fortified. In the war with Spain it had resisted the besiegers during more than seven months, and since that time the fortifications had been so greatly strengthened that it was considered to be the strongest fortress in the Netherlands. It was plentifully supplied with guns and ammunition, it was garrisoned by fifty companies, and it was considered to be impregnable by siege. However, the States had given the command of that most important fortress to a young man, Ter-Hoof, whose only qualification was that that he happened to be the son of the Burgomaster of Nimeguen, and he surrendered the impregnable fortress, considered to be one of the strongest in the world, after eight hours' siege.[1]

Zwolle was strongly fortified and garrisoned by five regiments of infantry and six squadrons of cavalry. Before the French had arrived the magistrate, supported by citizens, had resolved to surrender the town. The military commander wanted to defend it, but as he could not defend the town at the same time against the enemy without and treachery and cowardice within, he had to withdraw his troops from Zwolle to prevent them from being captured.

Nimeguen was bravely defended by the citizens against

[1] Neuville, *Histoire de la Hollande*, 1703, vol. iv. 52 *; Valckenier, *Verwirrtes Europa*, 1677, vol. i. 258.**

Turenne, and it might have been held had not the officers and soldiers surrendered the town in order to take service with the French army, in which a higher pay could be secured.

The foregoing instances are characteristic of the defence of the Netherlands in 1672.

The Netherlands had been the high school of Europe in the art of defending and besieging fortresses, for the war with Spain had been almost exclusively a fortress war, and they possessed the best fortresses in the world. Nevertheless the majority of the Dutch towns were captured in less than twenty-four hours.

Many of the Dutch fortresses were surrendered by the magistrates because Louis XIV. had, by proclamation, promised them to reward voluntary surrender by the preservation of their privileges and good treatment, and threatened to punish resistance with pillage and destruction. Others were opened to the enemy because the magistrate had been bribed. The hired soldiers, composed of the proletariat of the slums and foreigners, surrendered, partly because they preferred security and ease to fighting for men who were too cowardly to fight for themselves, partly in order to avail themselves of the offers of higher pay made by France. An appeal to the selfishness and cupidity of the magistrates and soldiers proved as a rule irresistible. Groll surrendered because the citizens were tired of constant party-strife and of the rule of many masters. Other towns welcomed the French from love of change, caring little for their nationality.

Groningen formed a brilliant exception to the general cowardice. Charles Rabenhaupt, a brave and experienced officer, who had been trained by Prince Frederick Henry of Orange, defended the town with 1,200 men against the enemy, who lost no less than 10,000 men, while the defenders lost only about one hundred men. The resistance of Groningen, and the astonishing disproportion between the losses of besiegers and besieged, show that the Dutch fortresses were exceedingly well constructed, and that they could easily have been defended against a superior force.[1]

Fortress after fortress fell into the hands of the enemy without defence, and the general panic became so great that

[1] Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book liii. chap. xxxii*; Valckenier, *Verwirrtes Europa*, 1677, vol. i. 421.**

Amsterdam, which by nature and art was the strongest fortress of the Republic, also contemplated opening its gates to the French. Many magistrates were in favour of surrendering before being summoned to do so, in the hope of thus securing good treatment. The Jews offered to Prince Condé two millions if he would protect them from pillage.[1] The leading families of Amsterdam had already taken steps to save themselves and their wealth by flight. Had a French force appeared before the gates of Amsterdam it would have surrendered immediately. Condé had recommended Louis at the beginning of the campaign to throw six thousand cavalry into Amsterdam. Had his advice been followed, France might have conquered in eighteen days that country which the Empire of Spain had not been able to conquer in eighty years, and which, because never conquered, was thought by the inhabitants to be unconquerable. Men not walls, iron not gold, weapons not words, defend a country.

At the most critical moment of the war, when Amsterdam itself seemed in the enemy's grasp, Chance, in the shape of a woman, saved the Netherlands from destruction. The fortress of Naarden, on the Zuyder Zee, situated ten English miles from Amsterdam, and garrisoned with 400 men, had surrendered to 120 cavalry, and, had the officer in command sent fifty of his men four miles further to seize Muyden, the fate of the Netherlands would have been decided. Muyden, a town on the Zuyder Zee, lies two hours from Amsterdam, at a point where several rivers and canals join. At Muyden were situated the principal sluices by the opening of which the whole surroundings of Amsterdam could be set under water. Besides, all ships which went to and from Amsterdam *via* the Zuyder Zee had to pass under the guns of Muyden. Muyden dominated the fortress and the harbour of Amsterdam.

Five marauding troopers entered Muyden, and these were for a moment the masters of the fate of the Netherlands. The magistrates hastened to deliver to them the keys of the town, but a woman at the Castle of Muyden, more courageous than the men, pulled up the drawbridge and shut them out. When, shortly after, a detachment of cavalry arrived to seize Muyden, they found some hastily-called-up Dutch troops in possession.

[1] De Gourville, *Mémoires*, 1724, vol. ii. 159.

Had it not been for the woman at Muyden Castle, the resistance of the Netherlands would have been at an end.

On the day after Muyden had been saved the sluices at that town were opened, the sea was allowed to overflow the low-lying grounds surrounding Amsterdam, and that town, surrounded on all sides by sea, had time to breathe.

To resist the invaders the Dutch had to abandon their naval defences. On June 13, 1672, the States of Holland resolved that no more ammunition should be sent to the ships, and that the gunpowder despatched to the ports should be returned. The naval commanders were informed that no ammunition could be sent to them, because there was not even enough powder for the defence of the frontier fortresses. On June 29, two-thirds of the marines on board the fleet were withdrawn to be formed into a naval brigade and to stiffen the inefficient army. Many war-ships, lacking men, and being quite denuded of ammunition, had to be laid up. The Dutch navy was reduced to making demonstrations out of the range of the enemy's guns; it had become a phantom fleet.[1] At the beginning of July, a few days after the Dutch fleet had been disarmed, a large English fleet, with numerous troops on board, intending to take Amsterdam, approached the Dutch coast. De Ruyter was in despair. He had practically no ships, no men, no powder, and no shot. He had to entrust the defence of the country to contrary winds, as he wrote on July 14 to the States.[2] Amsterdam would probably have fallen into the hands of the English, for the flat coast made a landing easy, and the population of the town was panic-stricken, had not providentially a fearful storm burst out at the moment determined upon for the landing, and driven the English ships away from the Dutch coast.

The Netherlands, and especially the province of Holland, girt by the ocean, mighty rivers, inundations, and the strongest fortresses in the world, had considered themselves impregnable. The government had so often told the people that invasion was impossible[3] and the people had up to the moment of the invasion felt so secure, that all fell into an indescribable panic and confusion when the whole country was suddenly over-run

[1] Brandt, *Vie de de Ruyter*, 1698, 488–490*. [2] *Ibid.* 496*.

[3] See page 303.

by hostile troops. The suddenness of the catastrophe, and the startling change from a feeling of absolute security and of the highest prosperity to one of irremediable disaster and ruin, stunned the people. The assembled magistrates sat weeping, and dispersed without having transacted any business. In Valckenier's words, 'Everybody appeared as if condemned to death. Trade and industry were at a standstill. All shops were closed. The law courts, universities, and schools were empty. The churches were crowded. Many people sent their wives, their children, and their wealth to England, Brabant, Denmark, Hamburg, Bremen, Emden and even France. Many buried their money. The Dutch government securities, which had been considered the safest investment in the world, and which stood above par at the outbreak of the war, were sold at anything they would fetch. In May 1572, the stocks of Holland and Amsterdam stood at 100. By the middle of next month they had fallen to 80. Upon the rumour that Prince William intended to defend Utretcht, the loans of Holland and Amsterdam rose at the end of June to 92 and 93. When that rumour proved untrue, they became again unsaleable.'[1]

Not only investors and speculators, but manufacturers and traders also, were ruined by the thousand. The Netherlands were dependent on foreign food and raw material, but the foreign trade was at a standstill. Financial and commercial ruin and starvation simultaneously threatened the Dutch. The ordinary customs duties received from the foreign trade of the republic at Amsterdam amounted to 2,139,203 florins in 1660. In 1672 they amounted to only 746,786 florins.[2] As during the war the customs duties were levied with vigour, for money was badly wanted, we must assume that during 1672 the foreign trade of the Netherlands shrank to one-fourth its former volume. However, as the first four months of 1672 were months of peace, during which that trade was little disturbed, it appears that during the eight war months of 1672, the foreign trade of the Netherlands had practically ceased to exist. The Dutch were thrown on their own resources, and the losses which they suffered were incalculable.

[1] Valckenier, *Verwirrtes Europa*, 1677, vol. i. 341 **; J. Grossmann, *Die Amsterdamer Börse*, 1876.

[2] Pringsheim, *Beiträge*, 1890.

The Dutch feared that France intended to ruin completely their vast commerce and industries. Indeed Colbert submitted to the King on July 8, 1672, 'Proposals with Regard to the Advantages whereby the Trade of France might be Increased at the Cost of the States of Holland,' desiring to transfer practically the whole wealth-creating resources of the Netherlands to France. The Memoir begins with the words: 'Nothing could be more desirable than that the trade of the Dutch should become your Majesty's trade.' Although Colbert advised that the Netherlands should be incorporated with France, he did not wish the Dutch to retain their trade and industry; for he advised the King 'to compel the Dutch to import all French products duty free, and to reserve to France the privilege of laying what imposts she pleased on Dutch shipping and on Dutch goods,' and he made detailed proposals for depriving the Netherlands of their whole trade with Europe, Africa, Asia, and America.[1]

In Bagehot's words, 'Democratic government is government by discussion.' When the republic was almost in the agony of death, the politicians continued discussing. They defended the country with words, and fed the starving people with words, although the loftiest sentiments expressed in the most beautiful language were unlikely to stop the invader. At the same time the governing orators acted with the utmost pusillanimity, and they had the effrontery to reproach the people for the disasters which they themselves had caused. De Groot, one of the politicians who had helped in destroying the national organisation and the national army, wrote, when contemplating the havoc which he and his political friends had wrought, 'Is it possible that the children and descendants of those who laid the foundations of our liberty are so remiss in defending what their fathers so gloriously won? Only manly and generous resolutions can guarantee us against the violent designs with which we are threatened.'[2] Even at the time when almost the whole country was in the possession of the enemy, the suicidal quarrels between the various political interests continued with undiminished bitterness, and the English Secretary of State wrote, 'The Dutch are not a little embarrassed from the distempers and competition in

[1] *Instructions de Colbert*, 1861, vol. ii. 658.**

[2] Lefèvre-Pontalis, *de Witt*, 1885, vol. ii. 216.

their government which render them incapable of taking any great resolutions.'

When the Dutch were reduced to helplessness and despair, they sent deputations to the Emperor of Germany and to the German princes, imploring them to come to their aid. To rouse their pity the ambassadors declared that the Netherlands could resist only a few months longer. If during the winter the water protecting Amsterdam should freeze, the French might march across the ice and capture the town.

The same politicians who had shown so much moral fortitude in wordy warfare acted like cowards when deeds were wanted. Although Spain and the German princes were coming to the aid of the Netherlands, the leading oligarchs were anxious unconditionally to surrender to France, partly in order to preserve their privileges and their wealth, partly in order to combat the rising influence of the Orange party. At de Witt's prompting, the States-General sent a deputation to Louis XIV. and asked him for terms of peace. 'In his eyes, and those of his party, the great humiliation to the foreigner was preferable to seeing the party of Union and the House of Orange again coming to power.'[2] Louis XIV. proudly rejected their offer of surrender, wishing to humiliate the Dutch still further.

The Netherlands would probably have disappeared as an independent State had the people not come to the rescue, abolished the supremacy of the politicians, and made William III. Stadtholder. For the salvation of the country it was absolutely necessary that the government should be in the hands of a single man, unconnected with, and uncontrolled by, party influences. The Dutch republic, like the Roman republic in time of danger, required a dictator for its salvation; for the cumbrous government machine, with all its checks and balances, tardily acting after endless discussion, inevitably broke down in time of a crisis. It was necessary that the commander-in-chief should be absolutely supreme, that the highest civil authority should be possessed by the military commander; for, as long as Prince William was the servant of the ruling party-politicians, his actions were constantly impeded by their meddlesome inter-

[1] Arlington to Spanish Ambassador, August 15, 1672.

[2] Mahan, *Sea Power*, 1890, 149.

ference and ineptitude. 'When the Prince of Orange wished to oppose the enemy here and there, and desired the advice and direction of his masters, the deputies to the army who accompanied him, he never could get anything from them except shrugged shoulders and many expressions of difficulties. Ignorant of war and afraid of responsibility, they neither consented to, nor absolutely disapproved of, the measures he wished to take, but kept all things in suspense and tied up his hands so that he could do nothing in the defence of the country.'[1] 'When at the beginning of the war, the governor of Wesel asked for succours, Prince William recommended to the deputies of the field that succours should be given. The deputies were unwilling to weaken the army, yet thought Wesel ought to be succoured, and, being unable to make up their mind, sent to the States-General at The Hague for orders. In the meantime the place was taken. Many other examples like this may be instanced to show the great prejudice the forces of the States sustained through his Highness being so bound up, and the confusion that was thereby occasioned in the army governed by so many heads.'[2]

The Dutch people saved the State. They rose almost simultaneously against the oligarchs, holding them responsible for the mismanagement of the war and for the disasters and the suffering which had overtaken the country, and demanded that the Prince of Orange should be made stadtholder. In many towns the populace besieged their magistrates, and by threats of immediate death compelled them to sign pledges to make the Prince of Orange stadtholder.

The revolt against the oligarchs took place spontaneously, and was brought about in the following manner. The burghers of the town of Dordrecht, distrusting the authorities, demanded to inspect the military magazine. This request was not refused, but when the keys were not immediately produced the report spread about the town that the magistrates were unwilling to admit the burghers to the magazines, so that they might not see how ill they were furnished. A cry arose, 'Treachery! treachery!' 'We are betrayed and sold to the French!' The whole town fell into the utmost confusion. Someone suggested

[1] *The Dutch Remonstrance regarding John de Witt*, 1672, 22. *Historical Remarks upon the late Revolutions*, 1675, 78.

that nothing but treachery could be expected till the governing traitors were turned out of the government, and that the State could be saved only if the Prince of Orange was given more power by being proclaimed stadtholder. The people rushed to the magistrates and forced them to sign papers revoking the Perpetual and Irrevocable Edict,[1] and Dordrecht's example was followed all over the Netherlands. Fear gave wings to the politicians, and roused them to that promptitude in action which patriotism had failed to supply. The magistrates resolved to make the Prince of Orange stadtholder, not in order to save the State, but to save their own skins,[2] and on July 3, 1672, the Perpetual and Irrevocable Edict was repealed.

In many towns the people demanded that their selfish, cowardly, incapable, and, in many cases, treacherous magistrates should be dismissed. The burghers of Amsterdam presented, on July 8, 1672, to the authorities a request in which they demanded 'that all those deputies of the city who sit in the assembly of the States of Holland should be dismissed, and that others who are not suspected by the burghers, but agreeable to them, should be deputed in their stead; that the burgomaster and the town councillors should pray the Prince of Orange to come to Amsterdam in order to change the magistrate in such manner as he shall think fit, and that eight of the councillors shall be taken into custody.' Forced by the people, many of the oligarchs had to resign.

The people revolted, not only against their governors, but against the system of government by boards of irresponsible amateurs who managed the country in their own interest. Many magistrates had to hide themselves in fear of their lives. John de Witt and his brother Cornelius became the principal objects of the hatred of the nation, and their resignation was demanded. Nevertheless, John de Witt, who used to profess that he ruled in the name of the people, callous and unaffected by the misery he had caused, did not intend to resign and to disappear into obscurity. The man in possession tenaciously clung to the supreme office, considering it his right to continue misgoverning the Netherlands during his full term of office.

In the brothers de Witt the broad masses of the people saw

[1] See page 352. [2] Neuville, *Histoire de la Hollande*. 1703. vol. iv. 69.*

the chief authors of their sufferings. They saw in them selfish political schemers, whose principal aim had been, not the advancement of their country, but self-advancement, the advancement of their party, and the humiliation of the House of Orange. Therefore a contemporary author wrote: 'Has not John de Witt, under a pretence of freedom, brought us into the greatest slavery of the world? Did his malicious governing tend to any other end than to root out and diminish the lustre of that illustrious House of Orange? Is there any person that is ignorant that he forced the whole State, as it were against their consciences, to suppress the Prince of Orange, whose predecessors, next to God, have given us our freedom by spilling for us their blood and spending their treasure? Has not this grand designer, with the help of his accomplices and hirelings, whom he rewarded by giving them appointments and offices, done everything to execute his wicked projects?'[1]

When the whole responsibility for the disasters of the Dutch army was laid on the head of John de Witt, the Pensioner tried to stem the tide of popular fury, by explaining away matters, and to strengthen his position by securing for himself the support of the Prince of Orange. With this object in view he wrote on July 12 to Prince William and asked the Prince to support and to justify him. In reply the Prince wrote that he did not doubt that de Witt had given as much time and care as possible to the army and navy, but that the multitude and variety of his daily occupations had prevented him from attending with sufficient care to military matters, that it was not for him to apportion blame and praise, and that de Witt should look for approval and justification rather to his deeds than to other people's words.

Finding himself deserted, reproached, and repudiated by all his former political supporters, and execrated by the masses of the people, de Witt at last, on August 4, more than a month after the Perpetual Edict, the chief work of his life, had been abrogated, resigned the Pensionership in a speech in which he placed the responsibility for the disasters of the country upon his principals, whose servant he had been and whose will he had faithfully executed. With the same justification the managing

[1] *The Dutch Remonstrance concerning John de Witt*, 1672.

director of a limited company might plead that he had ruined his company in obedience to the will of the shareholders, his principals, who had no influence whatever upon the management.

Impervious to the sense of shame, John de Witt retained, after his resignation, all his other dignities, being determined to maintain a leading position in the country. Perhaps he hoped to reconquer the Pensionership in time of peace. However, the fury of the people against John de Witt and his brother Cornelius could not be satisfied by their resignation. The people, maddened by the downfall of their country, cried for vengeance, cried for their blood. Fruitless attempts were made on the lives of both. On June 12, 1672, John de Witt was attacked and wounded by four men belonging to the burgher aristocracy, two sons of a councillor, a civil servant and a military officer. An attempt to murder Cornelius de Witt failed.

Cornelius de Witt had, probably without cause, been accused of having tried to bring about the murder of William III. He was confined in the prison at The Hague, and was visited there by his brother John, when the people broke open the prison gates, dragged out the two brothers, and killed them. Their fury was not satisfied by seeing them dead. They dragged the bodies to the public place of execution, suspended them naked by their feet from the gallows, opened and trimmed them like butchers' carcases, taking out their entrails; they cut off their fingers, toes, ears, and other members, and sold these by auction, and hawked them about the streets. To such madness of rage had the stolid and phlegmatic Dutch people been brought by misgovernment and consequent misery.

Numerous Dutch historians, who found it to their interest to defend the policy of the ruling class of burgher oligarchs, have described John de Witt as a great statesman and patriot, a hero, and a martyr in the cause of liberty, and have stated that the brothers de Witt were murdered by the rabble. In reality, they were killed by substantial burghers and prominent citizens, whose names and positions may be found in Wagenaar's History. The cause of the rage of the people was graphically expressed during the murder scene. After van Loenen, a notary, had wounded the Pensioner in the face with a pike, Jan van Vaalen, a lieutenant in the navy, shot him in the neck with a pistol. John

de Witt fell to the ground, and the lieutenant exultantly exclaimed: 'There lies the Perpetual Edict.' A seaman looking upon the suspended bodies, remarked, 'There hang the murderers of old Admiral Tromp.'[1]

While the people were raging against the oligarchs throughout the Netherlands, William III. endeavoured to evolve order out of the indescribable political and military chaos which the rule of the party politicians had brought about. His task was a most difficult one, not only because the politicians had destroyed the army, but also because all sense of national cohesion, of community of interests, of responsibility, of duty and of self-sacrifice, had been killed, by an anti-national and immoral policy pursued by them, which, in the name of individualism and of utilitarianism, had elevated the part above the whole, had created universal anarchy, and had inculcated deliberate and sordid selfishness in all by teaching that each individual should work for his own profit, thus increasing to the utmost, the vice of selfishness natural in men.

The state of administrative and military disorganisation, which the politicians of the party of disintegration had introduced into the Netherlands, may be seen from the following examples: Prince John Maurice of Nassau, one of the commanders, wrote to William III. on June 22, 1672, from Muyden, 'I am here in the greatest perplexity. I have only 500 men with me, and with these I am to defend various places which are three hours distant from one another, and Muyden alone requires two regiments for its defence. Besides, I have neither powder nor shot, although I have repeatedly, though in vain, requested the gentlemen of Amsterdam to send me the necessary ammunition. My soldiers are crying out, "We have no ammunition." I have been promised from four to six hundred peasants to act as labourers, but none have been sent. Hence I cannot make the necessary entrenchments.' A week later, on June 30, 1672, the same commander reported from Muyden, 'I have less than 600 infantry. I should never have believed it possible that Amsterdam could have given me so little help. After the greatest trouble, I have at last

[1] Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book liv. chap. v.*; Cerisier, *Histoire des Provinces Unies*, vol. vii. 352–442.*

succeeded in obtaining fifty labourers from them.'[1] The deficiency in guns was similar to that experienced by the United States in the Spanish war and by England in the South African war. Prince John Maurice complained, 'I require artillery which I can easily move about, but at present I have only some iron guns mounted on naval gun-carriages. If I had the artillery for which I have asked, I should be able to defend my position.'

Individualism, non-interference and Home Rule all round, with their motto, 'Everyone for himself' and promotion by favour in accordance with party-political requirements, had destroyed all discipline among the officers and men. On February 16, 1673, Prince John Maurice wrote from Muyden, 'The negligence of all the captains, lieutenants and ensigns, and the contempt which they have for their duties, are insupportable and pass belief. The officers are so undisciplined that they leave their positions at night and seek out lodgings in order to sleep in a comfortable bed; I discovered that when making the rounds. Last night I received information that the enemy was about to attack Weesp. I sent three companies to that place as a reinforcement, and when, at four o'clock in the morning, I inspected these troops, I discovered that Captain Groulart, his lieutenant, his ensign, and his sergeant had deserted their post, and that the sentinel was sleeping, although they knew that the enemy was approaching. Without discipline all will be lost.'[2] While the French troops in the beginning of the campaign spared the property of the Dutch, the Dutch mercenary troops pillaged the country.[3]

As long as lawlessness similar to that described in the foregoing extract prevailed, no effective resistance could be offered. Therefore William III. began to reform the country by introducing a strict discipline into the army. Those Dutch officers who had neglected their duty and surrendered towns entrusted to them were executed. In matters administrative, the supremacy of the whole over the part had to be asserted, and discipline and obedience to be enforced. The deputies of the conquered provinces had, partly from fear of the French, partly through bribery, partly in order to ingratiate themselves with their new

[1] *Archives d'Orange*, série ii. vol. v. 39.** [2] *Ibid.*** [3] Rochefort to Louis XIV., June 20, 1672.

masters, become the advocates of France. Nevertheless, they insisted on their right to sit in the States-General, and to influence the policy of the unconquered part of the Netherlands, acting in the same spirit in which John de Witt insisted on his right to misgovern the country to the end of his term. Notwithstanding their protests, the three conquered provinces were disfranchised and their deputies excluded from the States-General. In case of need William acted as a dictator. In June 1673, Prince John Maurice wrote to William III.: 'I have given orders, in accordance with your instructions, to open the sluices and put the land under water in order to save Frisia, but the deputies of Frisia, after first having sent an order that the inundation should be made, have now sent a counter-order.' To this letter Prince William replied, 'If the Frisian officials make any difficulties, have them shot on my authority.'[1]

In matters of foreign policy also, William III. became a powerful factor for good. At the outbreak of the war, he had induced his uncle, Frederick William, the great Elector of Brandenburg, to come to the aid of the Netherlands, and that Prince had with an army of 20,000 men caused a diversion.[2] In the course of the war, the Prince of Orange succeeded in gaining allies to the Netherlands in all parts of Europe, and, through his ability and strength of character, he became the soul of a mighty coalition with which he opposed the world-embracing plans of Louis XIV.

William III. was as incorruptible a patriot as was William I. Charles II. sent to the Prince the Duke of Buckingham and Lords Arlington and Halifax, who attempted to win him over by bribes, or at least to persuade him to abandon the defence of the country, because resistance was hopeless. When Buckingham again and again told him that all was lost, the Prince answered, 'Very well, then all is lost, but I will fight from ditch to ditch and die in the last.'

As the English parliament and people became impatient of the war, peace negotiations were entered upon between England and the Netherlands, and in 1674 a peace was concluded. The archbishops of Cologne and Münster retired from the war when

[1] *Archives d'Orange*, série ii. vo. v. 46.**

[2] Pufendorf, *De Rebus Gestis Frid. Wil. Magni*, book xi. 5.*

threatened in the rear by the German allies of the Dutch. Only the French remained in the field, and, aided by the natural strength of their country for defence, and thanks to the assistance of the foreign Powers, the Dutch again became masters of their country.

By the help of foreign nations the Dutch had been freed from their enemy, but they could not free themselves from the disgrace of their defeat. Up to 1672 the Netherlands had been looked upon as a State which was possessed of great material resources and peopled with manly men. The Dutch had been considered to be a rich, great and powerful nation. The campaign of 1672 caused the world to alter its opinion. The Dutch, no longer feared or respected, were considered to be a nation of cowardly tradesmen, ruled by selfish and venal political intriguers, who trafficked with the national power and honour, with the territory of their country and the blood of their citizens as with so much trash. The Dutch, who had held the balance of power in Europe, and who had been the arbiters of Europe, had become a byword among nations, an object of pity and of contempt. Politically and militarily, they had sunk to the rank of a second-rate Power, and they were to feel all the disadvantages and humiliations which their decline was to bring about.

William III. had saved the Netherlands from national annihilation. At first the gratitude of the nation was unbounded. Even the oligarchical politicians expressed their conviction that, not only had the government of John de Witt been baneful, but that the whole system of government with which the party of disintegration had identified itself had been a huge mistake. The States of Holland recorded in 1672 that the abolition of the stadtholderate in 1650 had been followed by the war with Cromwell of 1652–54, by wars with Portugal in 1656, 1658 and 1659, by the second war with England of 1664–67, and by the war with France, England, Cologne and Münster combined, which began in 1672; that the whole stadtholderless period had been a time of war abroad and of confusion and strife at home. Having summed up the pernicious consequences of the abolition of the national central and unifying authority, the States concluded with the following emphatic statement:

'By sad experience we have learned that our domestic dis-

sensions have furnished to the enemies of the State occasions and pretexts to attack us time after time, they feeling certain that these divisions would prevent us from working for the defence and the conservation of the States with that unity of purpose in which our ancestors saw the basis of this republic which the Almighty has so evidently favoured with His blessings. The differences which arose unceasingly with regard to the choice and election of a military commander to lead the troops of the republic, and the distrust which hence arose between its component parts, hindered and retarded the deliberations and resolutions which had necessarily to be taken in order to oppose the violent attacks of the enemy, and made us lose in futile disputes that time which ought to have been devoted to the good of the country. These divisions were responsible for the fact that towards the end of 1671, when the King of France unmistakably showed that he meant to attack the republic, many months were wasted in fruitless discussion on the election of a commander-in-chief, when troops should have been levied and everything have been prepared for war. Through the neglect of our preparations the State fell into the greatest danger of being ruined and entirely destroyed. Therefore the States of Holland and West Friesland have unanimously resolved to abolish these divisions, and to guarantee the security of the country for all time by conferring on the Prince of Orange and on his male descendants the charge of stadtholder and captain-and-admiral-general.' [1]

At last the republic had taken a great step towards its unification and towards the creation of a permanent national authority—if the mood of the moment which caused the politicians to pass the foregoing resolution was to last.

In the exuberance of their gratitude the Dutch people vied with each other in honouring William III. The States of Guelderland even offered to the Prince the sovereignty of their province, but the Prince declined it, because his acceptance might create jealousy and distrust and make people believe that he had conducted the war, not for the deliverance of the Dutch, but for his own aggrandisement. This proof of unselfishness and patriotism, and many others, should have won all hearts and disarmed his detractors. Nevertheless, the spirit of the Great

[1] *Resolutie*, February 2, 1674.

Privilege, the spirit which had guided the fatal activity of Barneveld and de Witt, remained, and it was to ruin the country completely. As soon as the greatest danger was staved off, the agitation in favour of disintegration and disorganisation was renewed. The politicians who placed their personal and parochial interests high above the national interests were not ashamed of slandering the Prince throughout the land, and of asserting that he meant to become a usurper and tyrant. The States of Holland and of Friesland, the ancient strongholds of parochialism, made no attempt to contradict these rumours, until much time had elapsed and these calumnies had taken root.[1] The terrible lesson of the war was forgotten. Economy without regard to efficiency became again the watchword of the deputies who directed the policy of the country. In 1675 the Netherlands resolved to assist the Spaniards against the French, and asked de Ruyter to go to the Mediterranean with eighteen war-ships. De Ruyter told them that that force was quite insufficient, and that they exposed their flag to almost certain humiliation; but the expert was over-ruled by the politician. De Ruyter proceeded with his small squadron to the Mediterranean. In three furious battles the Dutch fleet was almost annihilated, and Admiral de Ruyter, the greatest seaman of the Netherlands, paid with his life for the bungling of the Dutch amateur statesmen.[2] He and the elder Tromp were killed by economy.

The long drawn-out war against France was ended by the Peace at Nimeguen, which was hastily concluded by the Dutch, who thought only of their own interest, and who deserted their allies who had saved them. The Elector of Brandenburg, who had first come to the aid of the Netherlands, was left out of the Peace, and thus lost all his conquests. The plenipotentiaries of the Powers were indignant at the ingratitude and treachery of the Netherlands; their protests were followed by insults, and the plenipotentiaries of Louis XIV. reported, 'The conference which the Dutch and their allies had on August 11 at the Town Hall was spent in violent attacks upon the States-General, and the Dutch ambassadors were blamed with so many violent insults that bodily violence was almost resorted to.' The representatives

[1] Neuville, *Histoire de la Hollande*, 1703, vol. iv. 213-16.*

[2] Brandt, *Vie de de Ruyter*, 1698, 643.*

of the Great Elector vainly protested against the breach of faith by which the Dutch repeated their treason of 1648.[1] Frederick William, the Great Elector, wrote personally to the States-General, 'You will, of course, explain to me that absolute necessity forced you to conclude the peace in which you have deserted me. However, if one compares your proceeding in former times, when the republic was reduced to its last extremity, and when it fulfilled nevertheless all its obligations, with your present action, all Dutchmen must recognise that the Netherlands have arrived at their past grandeur through the courage and firmness of their ancestors, and that the opposite conduct may lead to your downfall.'[2]

The war of 1672–1678 was as disgracefully ended as it was begun. It was clear to all the world that, not only politically and militarily, but morally also, the Dutch had greatly deteriorated, that they were no longer a great nation, that they were a nation of small men with great pretensions, a State with a great past but without a future.

[1] See page 217.

[2] Mignet, *Succession d'Espagne*, vol. iv. 629**; Basnage, *Annales*, 1726, vol. ii. 938.*

CHAPTER XX

POLITICALLY AND ECONOMICALLY THE NETHERLANDS UTTERLY DECAY, THEIR FLEET, THEIR MERCHANT MARINE, AND THEIR INDUSTRIES ARE DESTROYED, THEY LOSE THEIR TRADE, THEIR WEALTH AND THEIR COLONIES, AND THEY SINK TO INSIGNIFICANCE

'The power of a State consists in three things: the number of the citizens, their military virtues, and their riches.'—VATTEL, *Law of Nations*, book i. chap. xiv.

'The most precious possession of a State is the productive labour of the people.'—COLBERT.

'Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished, but he that gathereth by labour shall have increase.'—*Proverbs* xiii. 11.

'Commerce, indeed, produces nothing; but it exchanges and distributes, as convenience requires, the objects and commodities already produced and accumulated. A commercial state of society, therefore, presupposes a superabundance of productive industry.'—ARISTOTLE, *Politics*, book i. chap. v.

'When trade is at stake it is your last entrenchment. You must defend it or perish.'—Earl of CHATHAM, March 8, 1739.

THE conclusion of the Peace at Nimeguen in 1678, which ended the war with France, left the Netherlands impoverished and exhausted. The country had been devastated by fire and sword. Huge tracts of fruitful land had become barren through the action of the sea-water, with which the low-lying grounds had been inundated. Trade and industries were crippled. While the wealth-creating resources of the Netherlands had shrunk their debts had greatly increased through the cost of the war. Peace was to them a necessity.

In 1685, Charles II. of England died, and was succeeded by his brother, James II., who also became a pensioner and a tool of Louis XIV. As King James strove to destroy the liberties and the principal institutions of England, to corrupt the law and

to convert the country to Romanism by force, his rule created intense dissatisfaction. Seeing the popular discontent increasing, and remembering the fate of Charles I., James wished to create a diversion by causing another Dutch war, in which France would undoubtedly have taken part. He allowed pirates to prey upon Dutch commerce and to use English harbours as bases of operation; he fitted out a large fleet, and strove to bring about another war with the Dutch. The danger of another war with France and England combined, which would have ruined the Netherlands, was very great, but it was averted by the energy of William III., Prince of Orange. Exactly a hundred years after Philip II. had tried to invade England with the Invincible Armada, in order to conquer it for Roman Catholicism, William III., with a Dutch army, invaded England and reconquered it for Protestantism. James II. fled, and William III., being the grandson of Charles I., received the English crown.

The success of the Prince of Orange in his expedition to England defeated the plans of James II. and Louis XIV. By the lucky accident that the Prince of Orange, as a descendant of the Stuart family, was eligible for the English crown, the Netherlands were saved from a war which might have caused their destruction. William III. remained Stadtholder of the Netherlands, and as England and the Netherlands were ruled by the same Prince, the Dutch were sure of England's support. The position of the Netherlands seemed absolutely secure.

Fear breeds union, security dissension. Though William III. sent back the Dutch troops which had accompanied him as soon as his position in England had become assured, his opponents in the Netherlands said and wrote, at the very time when the Dutch troops were being landed in the Dutch harbours, that the Prince had robbed the Dutch of their ships, their troops, and their money in order, first to seize the crown of England and then to reduce the Netherlands to slavery. The Dutch politicians wished again to upset the constitution, and to abolish the stadholderate, in order again to become supreme, and they libelled without scruple the prince who had saved them. *Audacter calumniare, semper aliquid hæret*, was their motto.

During his whole life William III. was the soul of the various European coalitions with which he opposed Louis XIV.'s ambition.

to form a universal Franco-Roman-Catholic monarchy. By William's energy and watchfulness Louis's plans were foiled. He saved Europe from French dominion as William I. of Orange had saved it from Spanish rule.

William III. died childless in 1702, through falling with his horse, which had stepped into a mole-hole. The well-known toast of the Jacobites, 'To the little gentleman in black velvet,' alludes to that event.

We have seen in the preceding chapter that the Netherlands had made the stadtholderate hereditary in the male line of the family of William III., but his sudden death left the stadtholderate vacant. The oligarchy did not wish to have a stadtholder. The very successes of the Princes of Orange, successes which must be attributed to their genius, allowed the oligarchs to persuade the people that the greatness of the Dutch nation was the result of the original democratic organisation of the States; that the contrary opinion maintained by the stadtholders and their friends was merely a pretext arising from their ambition to rule; that the appointment of a good general in time of war was all that was required for the safety of the State; that the Princes of Orange pursued a policy of war while it was necessary for the Netherlands to pursue a policy of peace; that the nation ought above all things to avoid making any changes in their original constitution; that the independence of every province was the strongest bulwark of national liberty; that the Treaty of Union of Utrecht, which joined the self-governing provinces in a loose confederation, was the palladium of civil liberty and of national security, &c. This mode of reasoning was so favourable to the ambitions of the burgomasters, magistrates, and other local dignitaries that it could hardly fail to recommend itself to them. To that circumstance must be ascribed the fact that the Netherlands politically stood still, that the government was unable to strengthen the State and to act with energy in time of need, and that, when the irresistible force of circumstances had compelled the Dutch to make the office of stadtholder hereditary, they availed themselves of the first opportunity of abolishing it.[1]

As the politicians of the party of disintegration wished to be supreme, and refused to have another stadtholder, the assembled

[1] Louis Bonaparte, *Historical Documents*, 1820, vol. i. 22.

States could of course not agree on the nomination of a successor to William III. On March 25, the province of Holland, the stronghold of the oligarchy, recommended that only a sentimental bond of union, good-will and mutual confidence should unite the provinces, because that ideal bond would prove stronger than slavish constitutional fetters. Shortly afterwards the deputies of Holland declared to the States-General their resolution not to elect a stadtholder. The people, unable to follow the lengthy and complicated discussions of their rulers, and deprived of all influence upon political decisions, except by rioting, acquiesced, although they strongly desired to see a non-party man at the head of the State who would direct its policy in the national interest. An acute foreign observer wrote, 'The position of the stadtholder has been vacant ever since 1702, and, owing to the jealousy of the leading Dutchmen, it will probably remain vacant for a long time, although the masses of the people long after a stadtholder, and long to see bounds put to those who at present steer the ship of state.' [1]

The local oligarchs governed the country in accordance with their policy of Home Rule all round, and the sense of cohesion, the feeling of nationality among the Dutch, disappeared completely. Their policy and their patriotism became parochial, and remained so during almost a century. 'It is very sad,' complained Joachim Rendorp, 'that most of the regents always think themselves obliged to place the interests of their province or of their town above the interests of the State.' [2] 'Before 1795 Dutchmen possessed no fatherland, but only a father town.' [3]

The strength and prosperity of every nation depend in the first place on the form and character of its government, and only in the second place on the ability of its governors. In governmental matters organisation is more important than men. Men of mediocre ability can easily govern a State which possesses an easily workable organisation; but a statesman of the greatest genius cannot successfully govern a State which possesses an unworkable organisation.

A State cannot possibly be well governed and administered

[1] Haller, *Tagebücher*, 1723–27, 30.
[2] Rendorp, *Memorien*, Amsterdam, 1792.
[3] Blok, *Eene Hollandsche Stad*, 1882, preface.

if the government is in the hands of a set of orating amateurs who are quite unqualified for their administrative duties and who, besides, are dependent for their political existence on the momentary moods of their supporters and on numerous incalculable chance influences and occurrences. A government so ill-fitted for its task, and so precariously situated, is constitutionally timorous, and is, for the sake of self-preservation, condemned to laborious inactivity. It is compelled to follow, but cannot lead, and is, owing to its very nature, forced to drift along aimlessly wherever the currents of the moment will drive it. It must prefer a popular to a wise and beneficial policy if the latter is liable to misrepresentation at the hands of the opposition. Hence it must act deliberately, without intelligence, foresight, prudence and energy, restricting itself to executing, by a thriftless hand-to-mouth policy, the vacillating will of a shallow, easily misleadable and more or less misinformed majority. A government so constituted and so composed must be bent mainly on maintaining itself by pandering to its supporters and to the noisiest section of the community, without giving overmuch thought to the interests of the nation. Such a government, being weak in itself, must be a source of weakness to the State which it nominally directs, but which in reality is left without direction. Under a government so constituted, unwisdom will be the chief characteristic of national policy; administration and legislation will be habitually fitful, belated and inappropriate; improvidence, waste, inefficiency and chaos will prevail in all public services. Being without initiative, such a government is bound to allow the sources of national power and wealth gradually to deteriorate and to decay.

The government of the Dutch Republic was constituted in this manner, and it was only natural that the abolition of the stadtholderate, the only national—that is, non-party—authority existing, which alone could influence the policy of the party in power in a national direction, should have the gravest consequences to the State. In fact, it may be said that, by abolishing the supreme national authority in 1702, the Netherlands signed their death-warrant. No politician in power, and no set of politicians in power, even if possessed of the greatest ability, patriotism, goodwill and diligence, could possibly have saved them.

Being without a stadtholder, the Netherlands passed the first half of the eighteenth century under the rule of a crowd of quarrelling politicians, who in matters political and economic followed the safe and convenient policy of laissez-faire. Hence the political and economic decay of the Netherlands, which had become noticeable after the first abolition of the stadtholderate, in 1650, made alarmingly rapid progress.

After the death of William III., the Dutch still fought with England against Louis XIV., in order to prevent Spain and the Spanish Netherlands from falling under the domination of France, but nothing useful could be effected when English and Dutch troops fought side by side. 'By reason of the cautious maxims of the State, and the bitter faction fights among the Dutch—those of the Orange party were for having a captain-general, and those of the opposite party were for governing all by a deputation from the States—no great design could be undertaken by an army so much distracted.'[1] 'The absurd habit adopted by the Dutch of sending deputies with their armies to control their generals again and again paralysed the allies. Marlborough just lost his most favourable opportunity of crushing Boufflers at Zonhoven in 1702. He was prevented by the same cause from invading French Flanders in 1703, and from attacking Villars on the plain of Waterloo in 1705, though he expressed his confident belief that he could have gained a victory even more decisive than that one at Blenheim.'[2] The Dutch army was exceedingly costly. William III. had made it an efficient instrument of war, but immediately after his death it became almost useless, through the supremacy of the party-politician, who made it a party tool and a costly sham.

Mismanaged and neglected by civilian politicians, the professional military forces of the Dutch deteriorated, and the military spirit disappeared from the nation. The people concentrated all their energies on money-making, neglecting military exercise. Soldiers and sailors were recruited either from the dregs of the Dutch population or from abroad. The defence of the country was nobody's duty. The Dutch army was an object of astonishment and derision to foreign nations. An Englishman noted

[1] Bishop Burnet; *History of His Own Time*, 1823, vol. v. 74.

[2] Lecky, *History of England*, 1883, vol. i. 102.*

with surprise, 'It is remarkable that almost the whole army of the States are foreigners. In Holland it is very difficult to raise soldiers, men being scarce, and only here and there a loose, idle fellow to be found. All are employed either in trade and manufactures or in sea-service. The generals are all either Scots or Germans. The younger sons of the German princes come hither to make their fortunes. The fleets are manned by multitudes of Swedes and Danes, who find it better living aboard the Dutch vessels than their own.'[1] The defence of the most precious national possessions was left to foreign hirelings and Dutch starvelings. Dutchmen were content to defend their country with their mouth and with their purse.

'Those soldiers are little to be depended upon who have no other motive for fighting than their pay, for their small pay does not, and cannot, suffice to make them fight bravely and die willingly for the country which has hired them. Soldiers who do not fight from love for their country will make but a feeble resistance if vigorously attacked, and as self-sacrifice and heroism cannot be expected in mercenaries, the rulers of kingdoms and republics ought above all things to create national armies, as all great nations have done.'[2] Dutchmen were to experience the truth of that maxim when, in 1747, Louis XV. made war upon them. Again most of the 'impregnable' fortresses of the Dutch opened their gates to the French without an attempt at resistance. Again the Dutch people rose in rebellion against the party-politicians and made a prince of the House of Orange stadtholder and admiral-general. Again the terrified politicians gave way to the popular fury, to save their lives, and resolved on November 16, 1747, 'Having seriously deliberated on the constitution and the nature of the government of the country, we have recognised that the experience of the past has proved that the republic cannot possibly be maintained unless it is possessed of a chief, for their chiefs have more than once saved the Netherlands from destruction.'

When introducing William IV. to the Council of State Count Bentinck said: 'It is to be hoped that the re-establishment of the ancient form of government will help to bring about unity

[1] *Description of Holland*, 1743, 111.

[2] Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, book i. chap. xliii.

and concord in the State, expedition in deliberations, the necessary rapidity in action, and justice and equity in giving rewards and inflicting punishments. By that policy the State has, by the Princes of Orange, been lifted up to its past greatness and prosperity, from which it has declined to such an extent that it has become a by-word among the nations of the world and a burden to its very friends.'[1] However, experience and argument were lost upon the Dutch politicians. 'Ambition and selfishness triumphed over patriotism. Immediately after the conclusion of peace with France, the oligarchs began again to undermine the national authority and organisation, and to make war upon the stadtholderate. The ancient party war was renewed. The forces of obstruction became stronger and more unscrupulous than ever before. No thorough reform, but only half measures, could be effected. Neither of the contending parties was strong enough to unify the country and to reorganise the government and administration. Two sets of politicians played the party-game for place and power so ardently that they had no time to think of the nation, and, while they were playing for their own aggrandisement and advantage, the greatness, happiness and prosperity of the Netherlands were lost for ever.

Although the wars with England and France had given fearful wounds to the prosperity of the Netherlands, and although all nations of Europe unceasingly made war upon the industries and the commerce of the Dutch by means of Protection, prohibitions, bounties, &c., imitating the policy which Colbert had so successfully applied, the Netherlands were able to preserve much of their prosperity, partly because they had a very great start of all other nations, and possessed the greatest business experience, the best connections, a well-established reputation abroad, and vast accumulated funds—partly because their chief competitors made very great mistakes, which were exceedingly profitable to the Dutch. Notwithstanding the attacks made upon it by the universe, the trade and industries of the Dutch increased considerably after the Peace of Nimeguen in 1678, but while the Dutch trade increased with comparative slowness, that of their competitors advanced with giant strides.

When William III. of Orange ascended the English throne

[1] Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book lxxvii. chap. xx.*

the Dutch people hoped that the Navigation Acts, which were destroying the industry and commerce of the Dutch, would be abolished; but when the Dutch ambassador urged their repeal upon William III., the King-Stadtholder laughed.[1] Notwithstanding the union of the two nations, the commercial hostility of England continued. The Dutch merchants who settled in England, hoping that the old commercial jealousy of that country was dead, complained that they had never been treated so badly by the English as during the rule of William III.[2]

The English Navigation Acts had proved exceedingly profitable to England and very harmful to the Netherlands. Child, Petty, and Davenant, the three greatest English economists of the period, agreed that the commerce and riches of England had never increased so fast as during the busy period preceding the revolution of 1688. England's foreign commerce had doubled in a few years. The total of the shipping which was employed outwards about 1663 was 142,000 tons; at the revolution of 1688 it amounted to 285,800 tons. At the first epoch the whole cargo exported amounted to about £2,043,043. At the second it came to about £4,086,087.[3] In 1680, Sir William Petty estimated the shipping of Europe at about 2,000,000 tons, of which the Netherlands possessed 900,000 tons and England 500,000 tons. From a position of maritime insignificance England had, under the protection of the Navigation Acts, obtained the second place on the sea, and she was rapidly conquering for herself the first position on the ocean. Since the introduction of the Navigation Acts foreign shipping had almost completely disappeared from the English coast, as the following figures show:

SHIPS CLEARED OUTWARD

	British	Foreign
1663–69	95,286	47,634
1749–51	609,798	51,386[4]

During the period under review English shipping had increased more than sixfold, foreign shipping had remained stationary;

[1] Macaulay, *History*, 1858, vol. iii. 435.
[2] Kerroux, *Abrégé*, 1778, 1006.
[3] G. Chalmers, *Historical Review*, 1812, 49.
[4] McCulloch, *Commercial Dictionary*, art. 'Shipping.'

the proportion of English shipping to foreign shipping engaged in the English trade, which in the former period had been as two to one, had risen to twelve to one. The Navigation Acts were a terrible weapon. The Dutch flag disappeared from the coasts of England and of her colonies.

France also continued increasing her wealth at the cost of the Dutch. Colbert died in 1683, but his system survived him. The policy of economic aggression was carried on without remission by succeeding governments. In 1587, France prohibited the introduction of herrings which were not salted with French salt, in order to acquire the great Dutch herring industry, and she re-introduced the prohibitive tariff of 1667.[1] By the aggressive policy of France a large part of the Dutch commerce was lost. In fact, Dutch commerce suffered during the ensuing years more through the tariffs of France than through all her wars with Louis XIV. and Louis XV. It is true that by the peace concluded at Ryswik, in 1697, the tonnage dues charged in France on foreign shipping were abolished, and that the French protective tariff was made less stringent, but the benefit to Holland was small. Owing to the war, and especially owing to the effective protective and fostering measures taken, the shipping of France had become greater and more efficient, while the merchant marine of the Netherlands had begun to decline, and had become less able to compete.[2] An English writer stated: 'For one French trading ship there was twenty or thirty years ago, there are now forty.'[3] The policy of Colbert had borne fruit.

England's empirical, and France's systematic, attacks on the commerce and the industries of the Netherlands steadily narrowed the economic sphere of the Dutch, but the harmful effect of the protectionist policy introduced by Cromwell and Colbert was to some extent counterbalanced, though not compensated for, by the mistakes which England and France committed, and of these we ought to take note.

Louis XIV.'s fundamental principle of government was 'un seul roi, une seule foi, une seule loi'—one king, one faith, one

[1] See page 333.

[2] Laspeyres, *Volkswirtschaftliche Anschauungen*, 1863, 133.*

[3] *Britannia Languens*, 1680.

law. In 1598, Henry IV. had issued the Perpetual and Irrevocable Edict of Nantes, which secured to the Huguenots the free exercise of their religion, and Louis had solemnly confirmed it. Nevertheless he revoked the Edict of Nantes in October 1685, and the religious persecutions consequent upon the revocation drove 200,000 people out of France.

Many merchants and skilled workers, who emigrated from France, went to the Netherlands, to the great advantage of the Dutch, who received them with open arms. They were given the rights of citizenship in all towns, the narrow and exclusive rules of the Dutch guilds were suspended for their benefit, they were freed of the obligations to produce a masterpiece before exercising their craft, and to pay the entrance fee to the guild, and they were also freed of taxes and of military service.'[1] However, the Netherlands were no longer the most attractive country to people flying from intolerance. Men persecuted for their religion seek not only liberty, for they have to earn a living. Consequently they do not settle in that country where toleration is greatest, but in that which offers them religious liberty and the best chances for money-making. They go to a rising, not a declining, country. Therefore 'the most industrious part of the Huguenots settled in Brandenburg, where they introduced the manufactures of cloths, serges, stuffs, druggets, crapes, caps, stockings, hats, and also the dyeing of all sorts of colours,'[2] and laid the foundation of the industrial greatness of Germany, attracted to the barren sands of Prussia by Frederick William the Great Elector, the founder of modern Germany.

While Louis XIV. destroyed, to the benefit of the Netherlands, many of the great industries which Colbert had built up by the persecution of the Huguenots, by his constant wars, and by his extravagance, England failed to derive the full benefit of her anti-Dutch economic policy which Cromwell had introduced, because no master-mind similar to that of Colbert harmoniously developed all the resources of the country. While the shipping industry and various manufacturing industries of England were vigorously promoted by the fostering activity of the State, other

[1] Pringsheim, *Beiträge*, 1890, 32.

[2] Macpherson, *Annals of Commerce*, 1805, sub. 1685.

industries were neglected and decayed, and the number of beggars increased through the effect of ill-devised laws. A contemporary English economist wrote, 'The Act for the maintenance of the poor is the true bane and destruction of all the English manufactures in general, for it apparently encourages sloth and beggary. Whereas if the legislative powers would make some good provision that workhouses might in every parish be erected, and the poor, such as are able, compelled to work, so many new hands might thereby be brought in that they would indeed make the English manufacturers flourish.' [1]

At the end of the seventeenth century economic England was awaking, and soon she was to become a terrible competitor to the Netherlands. A new spirit had arisen in England. Economic matters were no longer treated in the old happy-go-lucky fashion. England strove seriously to build up wealth-creating industries, and a prosperous commerce, and she wisely entered upon her career of economic expansion by studying the foundations and the causes of Dutch wealth in the same spirit of careful and painstaking inquiry in which Germany and Japan studied the foundations of English prosperity. It will be interesting to look into three or four of these old economic inquiries, partly because they will show how the foundations of England's economic greatness were laid, and how a race of peasants and pirates were turned into a race of merchants and industrial workers; partly because they will show that the unsystematic, blundering way in which Englishmen proceed in political and economic matters is a historic failing.

In a pamphlet entitled 'England's Improvement by Sea and Land: To Outdo the Dutch without Fighting; To Pay Debts without Money, to set to work all the Poor of England with the growth of our own lands, to Prevent unnecessary Suits in Law; With the benefit of a Voluntary Register,' Andrew Yarranton wrote in 1677: 'All people that know anything of Holland know that the people there pay great taxes, and eat dear, maintaining many soldiers both by sea and land; and in the three maritime provinces have neither good water nor air: and that in some of the provinces they pay fifty years' purchase for their lands, and are many times subject to be destroyed by the devouring waves

[1] Davenant, *Essays on the East India Trade* (1697), ed. 1771, 100.

of the sea overflowing their banks. And, notwithstanding all this strange and unheard of inconvenience, yet they will not quit their station, and remove to places of more safety and less taxes. The reason whereof is, first, they have fitted themselves with a public register of all their lands and houses, whereby it is made ready money at all times, without the charge of law or the necessity of a lawyer. Secondly, by making rivers navigable in all places where art can possibly effect it, thereby making trade more communicable and easy than in other places. Thirdly, by a public bank, the credit thereof making paper go in trade as far as ready money, yea, in many parts of the world farther than money. Fourthly, a court of merchants to end all differences betwixt merchant and merchant. Fifthly, a lumber house whereby all poor people may have money upon goods at very easy interest. As I have showed you their strength before, now in these five particulars you may see their policy, upon which lies all their happiness and welfare.

'Now I am a Dutchman, and have £100 a year in the province of West Friesland, near Groningen, and I come to the Bank at Amsterdam and there tender a particular of my land and how tenanted, being £100 a year in West Friesland, and desire them to lend me £4,000 and I will mortgage my land for it. The answer will be, "I will send by post your particular to the register at Groningen, and by return of post you shall have your answer." The register of Groningen answers that it is my land, and tenanted according to the particular. There is no more words, but they hand me the monies. Observe all you that read this, and tell it to your children, this strange thing that paper in Holland is equal with money in England. I refuse the money, I tell them I do not want money, I want credit, and having one son at Venice, one at Nuremburg, one at Hamburg, and one at Dantzic, where banks are, I desire four tickets of credit, each of them for £1,000, with letters of advice directed to each of my sons, which is immediately done, and I mortgage my land at three in the hundred. Reader, I pray observe that every acre of land in the seven provinces trades all the world over, and it is as good as ready money; but in England, a poor gentleman cannot take up £4,000 upon his land at six in the hundred interest, although he would mortgage £1,000 a year for it. No, and many gentlemen

at this day, of £500 a year in land, cannot have credit to live at a twelve-penny ordinary. If this be so, it is very clear and evident that a man with £100 a year in Holland, so convenienced as their titles are, and paying but three in the hundred interest for the monies lent, may sooner raise three families than a gentleman in England can either raise one or preserve a family in being, for the reasons already given. But were the lands of England under a voluntary register, all these miseries would vanish, and the land would come to thirty years' purchase, which I shall show you in its proper place.

'I can both in England and Wales register my wedding, my burial, and my christening, and a poor parish clerk is entrusted with the keeping of the book, and that which is registered there is good by our law, but I cannot register my land to be honest to pay every man his own.

'A register will quicken trade, and the land registered will be equal as cash in a man's hand, and the credit thereof will go and do in trade what ready money now does.'

The foregoing is a model of clear and convincing economic reasoning. It incidentally shows that the English nation is a conservative nation. During more than 250 years there has been a bitter cry in England for the registration of land titles, which does away with lawyers' intervention, but land registration, which existed in Holland three centuries ago, is still missing in England.

With regard to fishing boats, also, there was order in the Netherlands, and confusion, beneficial to the lawyers, in England; for we read in an old pamphlet: 'The Dutch have no law-suits upon controverted titles of their fishing busses. Indeed, they can have none. Their busses are all registered, and the owners can borrow money upon them everywhere, without the charge of procuration. Their other controversies in the fishing and other trades are determined in a summary way, with little charge, by men of skill in the business. In England all is contrary; no certain titles of busses, frequent controversies, dilatory and expensive suits. Wherefore the Dutch are able to sell their herrings for less profit.' [1]

The shipbuilding industry also was, towards the end of the seventeenth century, apparently much better organised in the

[1] *Considerations on the East India Trade*, 1701.

Netherlands than in England through careful specialisation, standardisation, division of labour, &c., for we learn: 'The model of the busses is seldom changed, so that the parts of one would serve as well for every buss. As soon as any such thing be bespoke in Holland, presently all the parts are laid together and the buss is raised with mighty expedition. In England the demand for these things is little, the artists few, everyone overcharged with variety of work; the contrivance and the workmanship keep equal pace; work is slow and clumsily performed. The work in Holland, performed with so much more order and regularity and with so much greater expedition, is therefore performed with less labour, and consequently the price of labour must be less. In Holland the people of this trade co-habit together. In so close a co-habitation of people, the carriage must needs be less, and yet it is lessened still by artificial cuts and channels, that all transport may be performed by water. In England the workmen are but few, and those dispersed, and almost all the carriage performed by men and horses upon the land, and this must raise the price of labour here.' 'Their busses are better secured in the intervals of fishing, and are with less expense and labour refitted. They have more mills and engines, more ways and means to save the work of hands. Upon all which, it may be concluded that their whole preparation for this trade is cheaper far than ours.' [1]

Two centuries ago Holland was in mechanical appliances and labour-saving machinery as far ahead of England as England is now of Spain. 'In Holland they abound with mills and engines. Such things are there promoted and encouraged to save the labour of hands, but has more than a single sawmill ever been seen in England? By our policy the people here must not be deprived of their labour by machinery. Hence every work must be done by more hands than are necessary. Certainly mills and engines must make labour less, but they also make the price of labour less.' [2] The lack of labour-saving machinery had a very unfavourable effect on English industries. 'No country in Europe manufactures all kinds of goods so dearly as this kingdom, and the Dutch at this very day buy up our clothes here, which they carry

[1] *Considerations on the East India Trade*, 1701. [2] *Ibid.*

hame and nap and dye so cheaply that they are able to undersell us in our own native commodity.'[1]

The industrial and commercial backwardness of England, lack of economic organisation and consequent dearness of money, had the natural result that much of the Dutch trade, which England had conquered from the Netherlands in war, was again lost by them to the Dutch in time of peace, as may be seen in the chapter 'On Trade Lost' in Josiah Child's 'New Discourse on Trade,' 1694.

Not only France and England, but all civilised countries, began to vigorously foster their trade and manufacturing industries by means of subsidies and by protective tariffs, which in the first place were designed to exclude Dutch merchants and Dutch wares. Exactly as the protective policy of Bismarck, directed against free-trade England, was copied by all other nations, so the protective policy of Cromwell and Colbert, directed against free-trade Holland, was universally imitated, and it destroyed the prosperity of the Netherlands.

In the Memoirs of John de Witt we read: 'The four columns on which the Netherlands rest are shipping, fishing, trade, and manufacture.' Let us systematically consider the effect of the aggressive economic policy of all civilised countries upon the wealth-creating resources of the Dutch.

The fishing industry was the greatest and the wealthiest industry of the Dutch. It formed the basis of their national prosperity and of their armed strength, and occupied the same place in the economic system of the Netherlands which agriculture occupied in Great Britain at the time when England was the foremost agricultural country in the world. Fishing in the one case, as agriculture in the other, provided the country with food and warlike men. This being the position of the Dutch fishing industry, it had to bear the first and the most vigorous attack of other countries, and the effect of universal State-aided competition upon the protected Dutch fishing industry was disastrous. We have seen that in Sir Walter Raleigh's time 3,000 Dutch boats were engaged in fishing.[2] Towards the end of the seventeenth century only 1,600 ships were so occupied. In 1786 only 219 herring boats left the Dutch harbours. In 1747

[1] Davenant, *Essay on the East India Trade*, 1697. [2] See page 143.

this number was reduced to 200. In 1765 only 160 herring boats went out to sea.[1] The enormous Dutch fishing industry, 'the greatest gold-mine in the world,' as it used to be called, which had been the admiration and the envy of the universe, had been killed by foreign government-aided competition.

When fishing became unprofitable an enormous number of people engaged in that mighty industry were reduced to beggary, and had either to turn to some unskilled employment or to emigrate to those countries which artificially fostered the fishing trade. By the wise and energetic economic policy of England, France, and other countries, many unemployed Dutch fishers and their boats were attracted to those countries, and the Dutch lost not only an enormous wealth-creating resource, but also a very large number of their ablest seamen. The important whale-fishing industry of the Dutch was also ruined. In 1774 the Greenland whalers petitioned for State assistance similar to that which the English and other nations gave to their fishers, but the Dutch Government, pursuing a policy of strict Free Trade, allowed that industry also to disappear.[2]

The Netherlands occupied as favourable a position for manufacturing as England occupies at the present day. England enjoys the unique advantage of manufacturing, almost on board ship, coal, iron, harbours and populous towns being situated on the sea-coast. The Netherlands enjoyed a similar advantage before steam-driven machinery was introduced. Through their excellent canal system, goods could be carried at the cheapest rates to the gates of every Dutch factory. The prevalence of wind in the country, and the enormous number of machines driven by windmills, gave to the Dutch as great an advantage in motive power as England formerly had when she produced more coal than all the rest of the world. Lastly, as no duties were levied on raw materials imported into the Netherlands, the Dutch were able to buy food and raw material in the cheapest market. In de Witt's Memoirs it was urged: 'No fiscal burdens whatever should be placed on the manufacturing industries, because they are not firmly attached to the country, especially as we have to import from abroad the raw material

[1] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 260.*

[2] Laspeyres, *Volkswirtschaftliche Anschauungen*, 1863, 146.*

which we transform into manufactured articles. If we once should lose our manufacturing industries, and if these should establish themselves in those countries which produce the raw materials used by them, it would be difficult to re-establish in Holland those industries which give a living to more than 700,000 people.'

This advice had been followed. While the whole world pursued the policy of Protection the Dutch preserved their policy of Free Trade, and endeavoured to fight with Free Trade the protective tariffs of their competitors. The Dutch were bound to be defeated in their struggle, because foreign nations not only prevented them from selling in the dearest, but also from buying in the cheapest, market. After having made the selling of Dutch wares difficult by protective import duties, they began to further hamper the Dutch manufacturers by placing export duties on the raw materials under their control.

Unable to sell their goods and to buy their raw materials at fair prices, the Dutch manufacturing industries rapidly declined. Competition with the powerful and flourishing State-aided industry of England, France and other countries became impossible, the neutral markets were lost, and even the Dutch home market was invaded and ruined by foreign manufactures. The celebrated Dutch industries withered away like a tree deprived of its roots. The Netherlands ceased to be the workshop of the world, and even their own workshop, for the Dutch became dependent on manufactured articles made abroad. In 1723, an observant German traveller wrote in his diary: 'Trade is declining in South Holland and at Amsterdam, as may be seen by the fact that the canal boats bring in less than they used to do, and loud complaints may be heard in Holland because the majority of nations have by-and-bye become wiser and manufacture themselves all that can be manufactured by them, and have learned to go themselves to the Indies for their tropical produce. The beautiful Leyden cloths have lost much of their sale because they have been prohibited in Prussia, Sweden, and Austria.'[1]

The disappearance of the fishing industry and the decay of the Dutch manufacturing industries naturally led to a great shrinkage in the quantity of raw material imported into, and

[1] Haller, *Tagebücher*, 1723-1727, 31.

of manufactured goods exported from the Netherlands. Fewer ships were needed for carrying on the country's trade; the celebrated Dutch merchant-marine declined, as did also the enormous shipbuilding industry of Holland, which had formerly constructed more ships than all other countries combined, and supplied the universe with ships. The shipbuilding industry and its subsidiary industries naturally followed the manufacturing industries to foreign countries. 'During the last thirty years,' wrote the author of 'La Richesse de la Hollande,' in 1778, 'more than a hundred sawmills have been pulled down in Zaandam, the centre of the Dutch shipbuilding industry, and during the last three years a larger quantity of sawn timber has been imported into Holland than a hundred sawmills could furnish.'

Some of the Dutch manufacturing industries were ruined because foreign markets had been closed against them by import duties, some were destroyed by foreign export duties which deprived them of their raw material, some decayed by the natural exhaustion of raw materials—for many of the mineral and vegetable products, such as coal, ore, timber, &c., are exhaustible. In former times the forests on the Rhine had furnished the Dutch with cheap and excellent timber for shipbuilding and other purposes, but the German forest became denuded of good trees. Timber could be imported from the Baltic, but England, Hamburg, Bremen, and Lübeck could buy Baltic timber more cheaply than the Netherlands, and thus the Dutch lost numerous industries based upon wood. Wagenaar complained that Holland had completely lost her immense barrel-making industry, and her trade in barrels and in staves for making barrels. Formerly Holland not only supplied herself, but also Spain, France, and Portugal, with barrels. The destruction of the Dutch barrel-making industry compelled the Dutch to buy barrels from foreign makers, and these promptly raised the price of barrels and barrel-wood by 40 per cent. against the Dutch.[1]

The fate of many Dutch industries was similar to that of the barrel-making industry and the shipbuilding industry. After having been restricted to the home market, the Dutch manu-

[1] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 52, 356.*

facturers lost the home market also, being systematically undersold by their foreign State-aided competitors. Many Dutch industries which had formerly supplied the world disappeared altogether. Foreign nations supplied the Dutch with woollen cloth, linen, silk-stuffs, and even with paper, the manufacture of which had been formerly almost a Dutch monopoly.[1] The Dutch manufacturers, having deliberately placed themselves at the mercy of their foreign competitors, were made to suffer for their folly, and they discovered, when it was too late, that it is not always profitable for a nation to buy in the cheapest market, especially when the cheapest market is controlled by its competitors, and may be closed by them at will.

The wealthiest Dutch industries, being most coveted, were the first to be attacked and captured by foreigners, and the Dutch had to restrict themselves to cultivating the minor industries. Industry after industry was ruined by foreign nations. The range of Dutch economic activity became ever narrower. The Netherlands could pursue only the more insignificant industries, industries which, to foreign nations, seemed not worth acquiring. However, the Dutch were not even allowed to retain for long their minor industries, which also were attacked in course of time.

The production of paper and books was one of the most flourishing minor industries of the Netherlands. Dutch paper was considered to be the best in the world. During a long time France, Spain, and Portugal used almost exclusively Dutch paper, which had a large sale also in England and Germany. An incredible number of books were printed in Holland, not only in Dutch, but in many other languages. Holland was the international book factory, and Leyden was its centre. 'There is no town in the whole world where so many people live by the book trade as in Leyden. There are whole streets which are full of booksellers' shops, and in every corner one finds printing works,' wrote the poet Haller at a time when all the staple industries of the Dutch had already decayed.[2] However, in the course of the eighteenth century that industry also was destroyed by the deliberate and systematic attacks of foreign nations. The

[1] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. ii. 51.*

[2] *Tagebücher*, 1723–27, 41.

States bordering upon the Netherlands enacted the most rigorous prohibitions against exporting rags for paper-making. The supply of raw material being cut off, the Dutch paper-making industry wasted away.[1] Paper mills and printing works rapidly increased in France and Belgium and disappeared in the Netherlands, and the skilled workers were compelled either to follow their industry to foreign countries or to turn to some unskilled and ill-paid labour.

Other minor industries of the Netherlands had a fate similar to that of the celebrated Dutch paper industry. Delft was renowned for its pottery, and formerly supplied all Europe with its beautiful ware, but that industry also fled to countries which protected their industries. 'Nowadays, one finds on the table only English, French and other foreign ware, and Delft has become almost a dead town.' The hat manufacture also was lost. 'Formerly Dutch hats were liked best everywhere for their quality and style, but nowadays everyone wears foreign hats, and the number of hatters has decreased in Amsterdam to an incredible extent.' Industry after industry being destroyed, the masses which live by the work of their hands became very poor, and the workers could no longer afford to spend money on their little luxuries. The consumption of beer and tobacco decreased. At the end of the eighteenth century, we hear complaints such as 'The manufacture of Dutch tobacco, which was a very large industry and which used to occupy in Amsterdam alone 3,000 workers, had disappeared entirely.' 'It is surprising how deeply the formerly so flourishing brewing industry has fallen. In various towns of Holland the breweries have been pulled down.'[2]

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the glorious manufacturing industries of the Netherlands, formerly the foremost in the world, had almost ceased to exist. Abbé Raynal wrote in 1770: 'Holland has saved from the shipwreck of her manufacturing industries only those which are not exposed to foreign competition.' The ruin of the Dutch industries greatly benefited their foreign competitors. The exports of English woollen goods, for instance, trebled between 1701 and 1770. According to Schmoller's 'Kleingewerbe,' the cloth-production of Silesia,

[1] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. ii. 51.* [2] *Ibid.* vol. i. 355.*

where numerous Dutch weavers had been settled by the Prussian government, doubled between 1739 and 1775.

Individualism, non-interference and Free Trade had been the motto of the Dutch politicians and business men, but they discovered in course of time that individual resistance to the government-aided competition of the world was hopeless, that Free Trade is the weapon of the strongest, and that the policy of Free Trade was rapidly leading to the total disappearance of the shrunken Dutch industries. When it was too late, Dutch industrialists asked the State for help and for Protection. 'From the middle of the eighteenth century, the States-General and the States Provincial were constantly bombarded with petitions to stop the importation of foreign manufactures, and in the deliberations of those assemblies we find these requests and petitions frequently discussed. The petitioners asked for protective import duties, or for the encouragement of home industries by money grants and bounties, or for remission of taxes, and argued that by such a policy, prosperity would return to the Netherlands; that the national income would be increased thereby; that it was in the interest of the State to preserve the national commerce and agriculture; that the protection of the national industries would cause employment to improve, and wages to rise, and the number of the poor to diminish, &c. There was hardly a trade which did not plead for government protection in one form or the other.'[1]

We have seen in the course of this book that the province of Holland was by far the most influential of the seven Dutch provinces, and in the province of Holland the influence of Amsterdam was paramount. The governing oligarchs of Amsterdam were engaged in trade and finance, not in production, and they had little sympathy with the suffering Dutch producers because the interests of the traders and producers are to some extent antagonistic. The trader wants to trade. He wishes for the largest possible turn-over, and his ideal is that everything produced by his nation should be sold abroad, and that everything consumed by it should be imported from abroad. In that case all the nation produces and consumes must go through his hands and yield to him a profit. The trader in the large towns cannot make a profit out of the peasant in the country, who eats most

[1] Laspeyres, *Volkswirtschaftliche Anschauungen*, 1863, 145.*

of his produce, and buys his clothes, &c., from manufacturers in the neighbourhood. Amsterdam could make little or no profit out of the majority of Dutch producers. Hence Amsterdam was enthusiastically in favour of Free Trade, although only a few thousand out of the three million Dutch people were traders, and although it was clear that trade can nourish a few, but not a nation; that a nation can live only by its production; that insufficient production would inevitably lead to the consumption of the capital of the country and to its impoverishment, and that trade cannot remain prosperous in a nation which is becoming poor. These arguments were known to the Dutch politicians and traders, but they did not care. In matters political and economic, the merchant-statesmen thought of the immediate profit regardless of the future of the nation. Their motto was that of the Marquise de Pompadour, 'Après nous le déluge.' Pursuing a profitable policy in the same spirit in which a squatter will destroy a forest worth millions to feed a few sheep or in which a savage will kill an elephant to eat its tongue, the great sources of permanent wealth were destroyed by the Dutch for the sake of a paltry immediate cash profit. Hence the bitter complaints of the producers, and their petitions to give State protection to the great national industries, were not heeded by the ruling traders, who hypocritically argued that the protection of industries was incompatible with liberty, that in a free country trade ought to be free. *Fiat libertas commercii, pereat natio*—In the sacred names of freedom and liberty the manufacturers and their skilled work were free to starve or to emigrate. 'The Dutch legislators and administrators see without regret that the native industries are leaving the Netherlands for foreign countries. The commercial laws and the economic policy of the Dutch are most favourable to their commerce, and it suits the Dutch rulers better to trade in the manufactures of other countries than to have industries of their own.

When, in 1738, the hatters complained that their industry was decaying because Dutch hats were charged a customs duty of twenty livres by France, and excluded by England, while foreign hats were freely imported into the Netherlands and were ousting Dutch hats, the Government declined to introduce an import

[1] *Encyclopédie d'Economie Politique*, 1788, vol. iii. 715.

duty on hats, but promised that the burgomasters and the other officials should be requested in the future to wear only Dutch headgear.[1]

The wealthy were asked to favour the home industries, but as the impoverished masses were compelled to buy the cheapest articles, they patronised foreign industries, and so paid wages to foreign workmen, while Dutch workmen were starving for lack of work. The economic policy of the Dutch favoured the consumer. The producer was neglected.

Politically and economically the government pursued the convenient policy of laissez-faire, the policy of folded hands and neglect, supported by misrepresentation and deception. Before the war of 1672, the Dutch politicians had refused to see the danger of an attack, notwithstanding the circumstantial reports of their ambassadors. They had declared that everything was ready for war, when they knew that their army was a sham and their magazines were empty. When the Netherlands collapsed like a house of cards, the Dutch politicians declared that they had been surprised by the enemy; that resistance was useless and surrender inevitable. Economically the Dutch oligarchs pursued the same policy of deliberate and criminal deception. They were so preoccupied with the party game, and the unorganised government machine worked with such difficulty, that it would not have been an easy matter to alter the economic policy of the country in accordance with the requirements of the time. Therefore the Dutch politicians endeavoured to explain away the awkward facts of their country's economic decay in their traditional manner.

When foreign nations were only just beginning their attack on the trade and industries of the Dutch, and the citizens asked the government for help, they were told by de Witt that everything was for the best in the best of all possible republics; that the foreigners could not harm the great Dutch industries by their unscientific policy of Protection; that Protection should be fought with Free Trade; that Holland was and always would be the richest country in the world, because it was the natural seat and centre of the world's manufacture, industries and commerce.[2]

[1] Pringsheim, *Beiträge*, 1890, 34.

[2] See page 302 ff.

This idea was spread far and wide by the governing oligarchs by means of innumerable books and pamphlets written on their behalf, of which it would lead too far to give a selection. Those who wish to study the Dutch literature on the subject will find a very good selection in Laspeyres' 'Volkswirtschaftliche Anschauungen der Niederländer,' Leipzig, 1863.

When the ruin of the Dutch industries could no longer be explained away, the oligarchs and the writers in their service averred that the decay of all the industries was natural and inevitable; that Free Trade was most beneficial to the trading interest, and that it was now too late to protect the Dutch industries, except by taking ridiculous measures such as requesting the burgomasters to wear only Dutch hats. Rule by oratory is rule by deception.

When the industrial vigour and prosperity of the Netherlands were turned into decay, the commercial energy and the spirit of enterprise of the Dutch also disappeared. A hopeless struggle kills hope and labour in vain has no zest. The Dutch, who before had been most alert, energetic and enterprising, became over-cautious, distrustful, conservative. Business men rather strove to preserve than to create, being unwilling to spend their time and money in business, and to see themselves at the end robbed by foreigners of the fruit of a life of arduous labour.

The spirit of caution and conservatism which the destruction of the Dutch industries had created in the commercial class spread to all other classes. The Dutch, who had been the most progressive nation in the world, became afraid of every innovation. Dutch scientific industries began to live on their reputation. The Netherlands, which had been the home of invention and the foremost country in engineering and the use of labour-saving machinery and technical skill, stood still while protected countries were advancing. The greatest mechanical inventions of the eighteenth century were made in England, and England became the foremost country for scientific manufacturing. Peter the Great, when working at Zaandam, discovered that Holland was no longer the foremost country for shipbuilding; that Dutch shipbuilders worked by rule of thumb, while English shipbuilders worked scientifically, and he left for Deptford.[1] 'Con-

[1] Bayle, *Dictionary*, art. 'Peter.'

servatism and disinclination to introduce improvements became as characteristic of the eighteenth century as the pursuit of everything new and the passion for adventurous enterprises were characteristic of the seventeenth century. The people began to live on what their forefathers had earned, and to convert the immense accumulated wealth of the country into domestic and foreign securities. Fortunes formerly invested in active production migrated to foreign countries and served to develop foreign industries.'[1] Art also was declining. All the great Dutch painters existed before 1700. The political and economic decay of the Netherlands had spread to the sciences and arts.

Co-operation could have delayed, but not prevented, the ruin of the unprotected Dutch industries hopelessly struggling against foreign States, but co-operation is difficult in a disunited nation. Co-operation presupposes subordination. Individualism, the doctrine 'Everyone for himself,' with which the politicians had split up the Netherlands in countless Home-Rule fragments, had engendered mutual distrust, created a war of all against all in political and economic matters, and had made national co-operation impossible.

The Dutch institutions for protecting and promoting industries, such as the guilds, were purely local, and were chiefly devised to restrict production and keep prices high.

Restriction, not expansion, of production was the motto of the Dutch guilds and corporations. In their desire to make labour scarce and dear, a lengthy term of years had to be spent in apprenticeship before a worker could become independent and all workers, intelligent and unintelligent, had to remain apprentices for the same time. Everyone worked for himself. Representative chambers of commerce did not exist.

If we compare the industrial organisation of the Netherlands with that of France during the time of Colbert, we find that in this, as in other things, the Dutch stood still while the French progressed. The Netherlands preserved their parochial, political and economic organisations, and Dutch individualism tried in vain to defeat national centralised governments and national economic co-operation. While Colbert harmonised all the economic forces of France and attacked with these united economic forces the

[1] Laspeyres, *Volkswirtschaftliche Anschauungen*, 1863, 32.*

Dutch industries and commerce, Dutch individual traders and manufacturers were unnecessarily competing with, and destroying, each other in internecine warfare to the benefit of France and England. Competition is not the soul of trade, but merely a stimulus, and co-operation is mightier than competition. Competition is like alcohol. In moderation it stimulates, in excess it kills.

The universities were managed not on national but on commercial lines. The university professors formed guilds in order to obtain a monopoly, and to retail science to the students at the highest prices possible. They kept the number of professors as low as they could, and tried to exclude all newcomers, in order to be able to demand high prices for lectures and high fees for examinations, although the Dutch universities had fallen so low that they were frequented more for the purpose of obtaining a degree than for instruction. The professors prohibited the use of many good books because they were interested in the sale of others.[1]

The decay of the productive industries naturally led to the decay of the international trade of the Dutch. In the memoir on the trade of the United Netherlands, which William IV. of Orange issued in 1751, we read: 'The decay of the Dutch trade may be seen from the fact that in the principal commercial towns an enormous number of shops stand empty. Those who have known Amsterdam during fifty years are astonished at its decline, and at the small number of Dutch seamen whom one now meets. Our merchants complain that they formerly brought to the northern peoples the produce of France, Spain, Portugal, and Italy, taking from them in return their own produce; but the trade between the North-East and the West of Europe now avoids the Netherlands. A few years ago Amsterdam was still the market for indigo and other dyeing materials. Now hardly a fraction of this trade is left. Germany has begun to trade directly with France, Spain, Portugal, and Italy, by way of Hamburg. Formerly three times more sugar, coffee, and indigo went to the Netherlands than to Hamburg. Now three times more sugar, coffee, and indigo go to Hamburg than to the Netherlands. Hemp, flax, and other northern

[1] Laspeyres, *Volkswirtschaftliche Anschauungen*, 1863, 187–92.*

commodities were before sent to Spain, and Portugal, and France *via* Holland. Now the northern nations trade directly with the western nations without touching Holland. There are no longer any Dutch mercantile houses in Spain, and it is surprising to see how greatly Dutch commerce in the Levant has declined. The enormous number of factories for printing cotton, refining sugar, and manufacturing many other articles which have recently been created in Hamburg, Bremen, Brabant and Flanders also show the decline of our commerce.'[1] Thirty years later we are informed: 'The commerce of the Dutch declines from day to day, and its decay is attributed to the decay of their industries, and to the fact that the Dutch are no longer as thrifty as they used to be.'[2]

Much of the very profitable trade with Russia was taken from the Dutch by Hamburg and Bremen, who were nearer Russia than the Netherlands, and by England, who, through the mighty development of her shipping, had become the chief buyer of Russian timber, hemp, flax, pitch, &c. which formerly were consumed principally by the Dutch navy and merchant marine.

The Dutch had previously almost a monopoly of the profitable Portuguese trade, owing to an advantageous commercial treaty concluded by them in 1661. However, that trade fell into English hands through the conclusion of the famous Methuen Treaty of 1703. Under that celebrated reciprocity treaty, Portuguese wines were admitted into England at a duty one-third lower than that paid by French and German wines, and in return for this concession the Portuguese market was opened to English manufactures. Thus, by a stroke of the pen, a large neutral market was transferred from Dutch to English hands and England became the chief purveyor to Portugal and Brazil.

The Methuen Treaty was as important for England's commerce as Cromwell's Navigation Act was for England's shipping. On the model of the Methuen Treaty England concluded numerous other reciprocity treaties and thus obtained the most favoured commercial position throughout the world.

[1] Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, book lxxx. chap. xiv.*

[2] *Encyclopédie d'Economie Politique*, 1788, vol. iii. 715.

The Dutch trade was following the Dutch industries to foreign countries.

To a prosperous foreign trade a prosperous home market and prosperous home industries are indispensable. The decay of the Dutch industries was logically followed by the decay of their foreign trade. Nevertheless the foreign trade of the Netherlands remained very considerable because the Dutch had to import foreign food. Their imports were therefore enormous, their exports were small, and many Dutch economists dwelt with satisfaction on the fact that, taking exports and imports together, the Netherlands still carried on a very large foreign trade. In view of the inability of the Netherlands to sell their own produce abroad, the huge quantities of foreign food imported were not a sign of prosperity but of economic decay. The nation had to live, and as its industries had been destroyed by foreign nations, the Netherlands lived largely on their accumulated capital, and paid with part of their invested capital for their imported necessaries. Their huge imports impoverished, but did not enrich, the country.

When the productive industries and the foreign trade of the Netherlands decayed, the Dutch were compelled to apply themselves to those branches of business which foreign nations still allowed them to exercise. They began to desert the manufacturing industries, and to devote themselves to the extension of their international financial business, in which the poorer nations could not compete with them.

As the decayed Dutch industries required little capital, the Dutch, capitalists were forced to employ their money abroad. It was inevitable that, when the industries and the trade of the Dutch and the best part of the Dutch population, had deserted the Netherlands, their capital should also flee to the shelter of Protection. The Netherlands, which had been a nation of producers and merchants, became a nation of money-lenders, and began to live on 'foreign tribute.' The governments of Europe and the world's commerce were financed by the Dutch. Merchants who required French or English goods liked to buy them through Dutchmen, because they gave the longest credit at the cheapest rate.' [1] The Netherlands occupied in international

[1] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. i. 505.*

finance a position similar to that which England occupied a few decades ago.

The enormous loans which the Netherlands made to all foreign nations and the vast credit which they gave to the traders of all countries, produced during a considerable time a huge income with little exertion to the Dutch capitalists, and from their point of view it was very satisfactory that other people had to work for them. However, no State can live on other nations' work. A few capitalists who make finance their business may, but a nation cannot, live by money-lending. Few people are able to preserve their invested capital intact, and the private investor is the most gullible of all human beings. Hence the founder of the House of Rothschild used to say that it is easier to make money than to preserve it. Owing to the competition of funds which could not be profitably employed in the Netherlands, a plethora of money awaiting investment was chronic in the Dutch towns. Contemporary witnesses tell us, 'In Holland there are so many lenders that everyone is forced to be contented with half the interest that will be expected here in England.'[1] 'One can hardly get any interest on one's money and one can borrow at less than 3 per cent.'[2] 'The Dutch Government borrow at 2 per cent., and private people of good credit at 3.'[3] Hardly any business yielded more than 2 to 3 per cent.[4] Before the French Revolution the shares of the East India Company yielded $2\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. and the $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. funds of the province of Holland stood above par.[5] From the financier's point of view, the Netherlands were by far the wealthiest country in the world.

Being unable to use their capital profitably in their own country, the competition for lending money to foreign nations became exceedingly keen, and loans were made recklessly whenever a fair rate of interest was offered. The Netherlands, after having handed over their fishing industry, their manufacturing industries, their mercantile marine, and their trade to their foreign

[1] *Considerations on the East India Trade*, 1701.
[2] Haller, *Tagebücher*, 1723–27, 32.
[3] Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, book i. chap. ix.
[4] Roscher, *Volkswirtschaft*, 1906, 569.
[5] *Traité Général*, 1781, 40.

competitors, now handed over to them their last resource, their capital. Foreign nations had first been allowed to capture the productive industries and the trade of the Dutch, and were now given a chance of seizing their capital as well.

The Dutch, who had been a nation of producers, had become a nation of consumers, and, with this change in their activity, a great change naturally took place in their character and manners also, for occupation determines character. Formerly, when the Dutch lived by their personal exertions, they were extremely, perhaps excessively, economical and frugal; but when the idea had spread that the Netherlands were a capitalist nation for which other nations had to work, the Dutch began to consider themselves as men born to live without labour and to enjoy themselves. Prudence and economy were cast to the winds, and they became extremely luxury-loving. At a time when in the Netherlands the poor were crying for work, millions of Dutch money went yearly abroad, and the sons of the wealthy spent their days in idleness and in vicious pleasures.[1] The descendants of the industrious and thrifty Dutch merchants disdained to earn a living by work.

The Netherlands, though immensely wealthy on paper, were not wealthy in reality. There was a considerable number of wealthy capitalists in the Netherlands, but the nation was poor. The population consisted of two classes: of rich men who lived on their income, largely derived from capital invested abroad, and of workers of every kind, who either were casually employed at wages which, considering the high cost of living, were insufficient, or were unemployed and had to be maintained by charity. In former times, beggars, loafers, and unemployed workers were almost unknown in Holland,[2] but towards the end of the eighteenth century their number became so enormous that the decline of the prosperity of the Netherlands was ascribed by many to the large number of indigent unemployed who had to be maintained by the public.[3] However, the prevalence of beggary and of unemployment was not the cause, but the effect, of Holland's diminished prosperity. When foreign state-aided competition had destroyed the Dutch industries, fewer workers were required.

The creation and extension of a business requires constant

[1] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. ii. 213.*
[2] See pages 124 and 204.
[3] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. ii. 235.*

watchfulness and much ability, but the management of carefully invested capital is a mechanical occupation. Wealthy Dutchmen therefore, began to leave the administration of their capital to managers and secretaries, and the fashion set by them was followed by those who had inherited a business. In Abbé Raynal's words, 'The vices which followed the accumulation of wealth grew quicker than wealth itself. Wealthy business men made relatives and friends directors and officials of the public companies in which they were interested, and left the most important decisions to managers who sometimes were little fitted for their post, sometimes dishonest, sometimes careless. Hence many businesses were ruined.[1]

Dutch colonists who had made money retired from business, leaving the direction of their plantations to trusted agents. Nearly all the proprietors of Dutch colonial wealth flocked to Europe. Their heirs, unable to manage or supervise colonial properties, had to leave their agents uncontrolled. Absence of supervision led to abuses, mismanagement, and fraud. The income from colonial properties declined, absentee owners became anxious to sell them, and their colonial agents and other inhabitants of the colonies were willing to buy them, provided the proprietors or others would advance them the whole, or a large part, of the purchase money. Most colonial properties changed hands in this manner. In course of time many of these loans were repudiated, and numerous Dutchmen lost both their estates and their money to bona-fide colonists. Dutch capitalists discovered that it is difficult to preserve an income intact. Capital, like every other factor of production, is liable to wear and tear, especially when not managed by expert owners.

Idle fathers have idle sons. The sons of the well-to-do were brought up in the ways of idleness and effeminacy, and the preservation of their money, which made a life of fashionable idleness possible, was impressed upon them as their chief duty from their very childhood. 'Money answereth all things' became the motto of the Dutch. Talent and personal merit were disregarded. All things were measured by their money value. Everyone tried to live without work. Swindling, if not discovered, was no longer considered dishonourable.[2]

[1] *Histoire des Etablissements et du Commerce*, 1770.

[2] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. ii. 221.*

When the Netherlands began to live on their money and on their wits, Dutch society became greatly demoralised and corrupted. Through the decay of commerce and the growing number of failures of business men, merchants as a class lost caste. Well-to-do men did not allow their daughters to marry business men. Dutch people who had money would invest it anywhere except in business in the Netherlands. The large middle class also retired from business, following the example set by the foremost people. Towards the end of the eighteenth century there were more people in Holland who lived in idleness on their income than there were to be found in any other country in the world.[1]

'The decay of trade made it extremely difficult for those who had to live by their work to make a living. That difficulty acted as a restraint upon marriage. Business men and workers, especially those of the middle class, remained unmarried, being unable to maintain a family. The birth-rate decreased. Had it not been for the influx of foreigners, the population would certainly have shrunk. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, when idleness had become fashionable, many foreigners, especially Germans, who had gone to Holland to learn the language, settled in the Netherlands. Having been brought up in more simple and more industrious habits than the Dutch, these foreigners gradually replaced native merchants and workers. On the Exchange of Amsterdam only very few merchants of Dutch birth could be found.'[2] Dutch merchants rather engaged foreign clerks than Dutchmen, because Dutch clerks were lazy, careless, pleasure-loving, and ignorant.[3]

Owing to the decay of trade the burden of taxation, which formerly had been borne with ease, became unbearably heavy to men engaged in business. Therefore Dutch business men began systematically to defraud the revenue. As long as taxes and imposts are moderate, few persons care to defraud the revenue, especially in a country where business is founded upon trust, but when taxation becomes unbearably heavy, people no longer feel morally bound to pay the taxes, and even honest people feel justified in evading payment, arguing that the

[1] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. ii. 26.* [2] *Ibid.* 230.*

[3] Laspeyres, *Volkswirtschaftliche Anschauungen*, 1863, 154.*

demands made upon the tax payer ought to be in accordance with his ability to pay, and that no community is entitled to deprive its citizens of the fruits of their labour and to pauperise them by taxation or otherwise. It is a universal experience that, wherever taxation is excessive, frauds upon the revenue are no longer considered dishonourable, and become general. Moderate taxation begets diligence and thrift; immoderate taxation, despair and universal fraud. The former is educational, the latter demoralising. Obedience has its limits, and the resistance to tyrannous authority is justified. The right of resistance is a fundamental right in every democracy, and the birthright of every Anglo-Saxon sanctioned by the Magna Charta. The more unscrupulous Dutchmen began to defraud the revenue, and their competitors followed their example in order not to be placed at a disadvantage.

Fraud begets fraud, and bad trade makes bad morals. Dishonest practices towards the State lead to dishonest practices towards individuals. The Dutch commission merchants, who had been world-renowned for their integrity, began to abuse the confidence placed in them. Those who took advantage of their customers prospered in many instances. Therefore their example was soon followed by numerous others, especially as the government did not consider itself called upon to interfere with freedom of trade in the interest of foreigners. Soon the idea began to prevail that everything is allowed that is not positively forbidden by law, and that laws are made to be evaded. The good faith of Dutch merchants became a matter of the past. Dutch merchants no longer disdained any means for making money. Their conservative habits disappeared. Touting for orders became persistent, annoying. Commission merchants offered to transact business at unremunerative rates, or even gratis, but recouped themselves by illicit overcharges.[1] The necessity of making a living under the most adverse circumstances destroyed commercial morality. Dutch merchants were prompted by the same instinct which causes a starving labourer to steal a loaf. Fraudulent bankruptcies and compositions became exceedingly frequent, especially as the Dutch bankruptcy laws favoured the bankrupt, and therefore encouraged fraud. The Dutch laws facilitated, and therefore promoted, swindling of

[1] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. ii. 158–168.*

every kind. Professional swindlers could exercise their calling with impunity in the Netherlands.

Weeds spring up in rotten soil. While honest business decayed, dishonest business flourished. Numerous usurers prospered on the ignorance and the rashness of young men, and the authorities did not proceed against them, pleading the sacred principles of freedom of trade. Unfortunately, trade was free for rogues and swindlers, but not for honest men.[1]

Dutch law was most satisfactory in theory, but most unsatisfactory in practice. 'In no country is justice better administered than in the Netherlands, but it is to be regretted that lawsuits are drawn out to a greater length than in any other country through the interested chicanery of the lawyers.'[2] The judges were incorruptible, but they could not hinder Dutchmen from being ruined by the delays of the law and its obscurity, which facilitated endless chicanery. The longest purse was strongest in law.

Owing to the growing unprofitableness of trade and the deterioration in the morality of traders, many of the foremost business men retired from business in disgust, and the more unscrupulous members of the business community were left in possession of the field. Formerly Dutch merchants, who were known to be industrious, steady, and sober, could obtain loans without security. When trade and trade morality declined, honest Dutch merchants could not always obtain loans, and foreigners were liberally financed by people who refused to put money into Dutch industries or to finance Dutch traders.[3]

From a republic ruled by merchants, the Netherlands had become a State ruled by men of leisure who lived for their pleasure, who thought it beneath them to work, and who considered the government of the country to be a privilege of their class. Children of the upper class were taught from an early age that they were born to rule the masses, and the influence of their parents procured for them those responsible and administrative positions which had formerly been occupied by conscientious and painstaking experts. The sons of the

[1] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. ii. 206.*

[2] Janiçon, *État présent des Provinces Unies*, 1755, vol. i. 39.

[3] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. ii. 226.*

burgher aristocracy aspired to sinecures in some public office where the real work was left to obscure subordinates. Thus demoralisation spread from the commercial circles to all parts of the civil service.[1] 'Nobody,' wrote President Scherer, 'is allowed to become a hairdresser, a cook, a confectioner, a baker, or a cobbler, unless he has proved his ability, but we entrust our wealth, our honour, and our blood absolutely to the first comer.'

Towards the end of the eighteenth century Abbé Raynal wrote: 'Public spirit in Holland is dead. The only objects for which the contending parties work and fight are the places which they wish to occupy. The men who defeated Philip II. have become mean, base and untruthful. They buy and sell their oaths as they do their groceries, and those men who formerly astonished the universe by their exertions and by their virtues will become a reproach and a by-word.'[2] These words were written in 1770, and the Abbé was to see his prophecy fulfilled.

'The rich man's wealth is his strong city.' Although money-bags do not defend themselves, the Dutch had trusted for their defence in the first place to their wealth and in the second to the balance of power. In other words, the Dutch left the defence of their country to foreign States. Living a life of ease and relying on other nations' work, the Dutch also relied on other nations' weapons. They argued, 'We are necessary in the system of Europe. France cannot allow England to defeat us and become all-powerful on sea, and England cannot allow us to be invaded by France, which, in the possession of the Dutch harbours, would threaten England's mercantile position and her existence.'

The balance of power had preserved the Netherlands during a long time, but the best artificial contrivance and the most perfect machinery are liable to break down at the critical moment. The concert of Europe was destroyed, and the balance of power was overthrown at the end of the eighteenth century. The war between England and her American colonies (1775–1783) caused France and Spain to make war upon England. In 1780 the celebrated Armed Neutrality League was formed for the purpose of destroying the maritime supremacy of England. This league was joined by most European Powers. Holland, thinking that

[1] *Richesse de la Hollande*, 1778, vol. ii. 216.*

[2] *Histoire des Etablissements et du Commerce*, 1770.

England would be defeated, entered the league, although her navy had completely decayed, and she was immediately attacked and utterly defeated by England. This defeat had the most terrible consequences for the Netherlands. Nearly all the Dutch colonies were conquered, and as the Dutch had a fleet only on paper, merchant ships were captured in large numbers, the country became impoverished, and the people cried for peace before the last fraction of their trade had disappeared. The fourth Anglo-Dutch war, that of 1780–83, gave the finishing stroke to the celebrated merchant marine of the Netherlands. In 1780, 2,080 Dutch ships passed the Danish Sound; in 1781 only fifty-five ships took that route.[1] The Dutch flag disappeared from the sea.

Worse things were in store for the unfortunate Dutch republic, which, under the guidance of its politicians, had refused to become a great and powerful State, which, in the name of thrift, had neglected its military and naval forces, and which, in the name of political economy and of freedom of trade, had allowed its productive industries to decay.

The Dutch republic, which in the seventeenth century had been a leading Great Power and the arbiter of Europe, had sunk in the eighteenth century to the rank of a third-rate Power, an object of pity and contempt. An insult offered by the oligarchs to the sister of Frederick William II., King of Prussia, caused that potentate to attack the Netherlands. In September 1787 a Prussian corps of but 20,000 men overran the Netherlands, and took Amsterdam on October 8.[2] Seven years later, in 1794, the armies of revolutionary France invaded the Netherlands. The Dutch inundated their country, but the severe winter converted the water into ice. Amsterdam was taken, the Dutch fleet at the Texel, surrounded by solid ice, was captured by French cavalry. The Netherlands were cut up by France; they had to pay 100,000,000 florins to the conquerors; they were annexed to France; they were converted by Napoleon I. into a kingdom; they had to maintain a French garrison; they had to introduce conscription and to provide an enormous army to fight Napoleon's battles. The small remnant of Dutch industry, commerce and

[1] Pringsheim, *Beiträge*, 1890, 24.

[2] Pfau, *Geschichte des Preuss. Feldzuges*, 1790.

wealth was destroyed by the very policy which Colbert had advised in 1672.[1] French wares were introduced duty free in the Netherlands, the Dutch industries were deliberately undersold in their own market, but Dutch wares were excluded from France. The Dutch troops were clothed and armed by French manufactories. Unable to earn a living, the unfortunate people consumed their savings, starved, or emigrated. The once flourishing Dutch towns became deserted. At The Hague, Leyden, Delft, Haarlem, and other towns thousands of excellent houses were pulled down, because the owners had not enough money left to keep them in repair. The Netherlands could no longer raise the funds necessary for maintaining the sea-dykes. The sea began to inundate the land, the country became a wilderness.[2]

The Napoleonic wars spread bankruptcy throughout Europe. Not only countless merchants and manufacturers, but various governments, such as Spain, France, Prussia, Austria, Hesse, and Westphalia became bankrupt. According to Thiers, the Dutch capitalists lost half their income,[3] but that estimate seems quite inadequate. It seems more likely that they lost three-quarters of their income.

At the end of the eighteenth century, a short time before the collapse of the Netherlands, the Dutch seemed to be by far the richest nation in the world, and, on paper, they were so. It was estimated that no less than 3,000 tons of gold, valued at 100,000 florins the ton, were deposited in the Bank of Amsterdam;[4] the abundance of money at Amsterdam was prodigious, so that the discount rate for bills of exchange fluctuated between 2½ per cent. and 3 per cent. in accordance with the state of the money market.[5] The Two-and-a-half per cent. State loans used to stand at 110, and therefore yielded less than English Consols have ever yielded.[6] Money was almost unlendable in Holland. Many economists were of

[1] See page 385.

[2] Lennep, *Geschiedenissen*, 1889, vol. iv.; van der Aa, *Geschiedenis* (1793–1802), 1802–08, vol. i.–x.

[3] Thiers, *Consulat et Empire*, xii. 82.

[4] *Encyclopédie du Commerce*, 1789, vol. i. 189.

[5] *Ibid.* 1783, vol. ii. 647.

[6] *Encyclopédie d'Economie Politique*, 1786, vol. ii. 688; Duijser, *Geschiedenis*, 1898, 67.

opinion that the little province of Holland was richer than the British Empire. But in 1810 the interest paid on the national debt had to be reduced to one-third of the former amount. The celebrated Dutch East India Company and the famous Bank of Amsterdam, formerly the greatest and wealthiest commercial corporations in the world, went into liquidation. The trade with the few colonial possessions left to the Dutch ceased altogether. The death-rate became greater than the birth-rate. Between 1795 and 1814 there were seven deaths to every four births in Amsterdam.[1] In 1808 one-half of the inhabitants of Amsterdam lived entirely or partly upon alms. Notwithstanding the enormous increase of taxation, and the great increase in the prices of bread and all other necessaries, wages remained stationary.[2] The population of Leyden, one of the chief manufacturing towns, fell from 100,000 to less than 80,000. The Dutch were reduced from opulence to beggary and starvation. The sufferings of all classes in the Netherlands were harrowing and defy description.

Napoleon was overthrown and, when the frontiers of the various countries were rearranged, the Netherlands were, by the will of the Powers of Europe, converted into a kingdom. A Prince of the House of Orange ascended the throne, but in the general restoration the local governments of the Netherlands and the old administrative chaos were not restored. The revolution had torn up the charters of the towns, abolished their ancient privileges and those of the oligarchs, and destroyed the organised disorganisation of the Netherlands. The greatness, happiness and prosperity of the Netherlands, and the privileges of the oligarchs, for which Barneveld and de Witt had given their lives, had disappeared simultaneously. Endeavouring to preserve their privileges by violence and intrigue, without heed of the nation, the oligarchs had destroyed their country and themselves.

The Netherlands, which once occupied a position in the world greater than that held at present by Great Britain, have declined to insignificance, and Holland may disappear altogether as an independent State. She may, and very possibly will, become

[1] Roscher, *Grundlagen*, 1906, 748.
[2] Roscher, *Gewerbefleiss*, 1899, 105.

absorbed by Germany,[1] and it is conceivable that, in a century or two, the Dutch language will be a dead language, known only by a few philologists. Since steam and electricity have abolished space the time of great nations has arrived. The Netherlands have a past, but no future.

[1] See my paper 'The Absorption of Holland by Germany,' in *Nineteenth Century and After*, July 1906.

CHAPTER XXI

AN ANALYSIS OF THE CAUSES WHICH LED TO THE DECLINE OF THE NETHERLANDS AND THE LESSON TAUGHT BY IT

'Nothing is more pernicious to a State than disunion.'—PLATO, *de Republica*, book v.

'The Greeks being brave and prudent, calm in deliberation, and vigorous in action, and enjoying all the advantages springing from the rule of liberty and of the law, were qualified to rule the world—had they been happily united under a single government.'—ARISTOTLE, *Politics*, book iv. chap. vii.

'The Republic of Athens, when governed by Pericles, though a democracy in name, was a monarchy in fact. After his death all the party leaders, none of whom possessed eminence and authority similar to that of Pericles, strove to rule the State. Hence they were forced to flatter the multitude and to neglect affairs of State, and there arose many grave mistakes fatal to a State possessing extensive dominions. Absorbed by party feuds of their own making, the politicians neglected the army and the people were quarrelling among themselves. But for these dissensions, which utterly incapacitated the Athenians from making an adequate resistance, Sparta would not have vanquished Athens.'—THUCYDIDES, book ii.

'Where many rule, both government and discipline fall into contempt.'—NICETAS (of Constantinople), in Alexio Manuelis filio.

'All Italy was ruined by two factions, the Guelphs and the Ghibelines.'—MACHIAVELLI, *History of Florence*, book i.

'The best form of government is that which doth actuate and dispose every part and member of the State to the common good. If this mutual relation and intercourse be broken, the whole frame will quickly be dissolved and fall in pieces.'—JOHN PYM, Speech, June 4, 1628.

'The Unity of Government which constitutes you one people is a main pillar in the edifice of your real independence, the support of your tranquillity at home, of your peace abroad, of your safety, of your prosperity, of that very liberty which you so highly prize. It is of infinite moment that you should properly estimate the immense value of your national union to your collective and individual happiness.'—*Washington's Farewell Address to the American People*, September 17, 1796.

HAVING followed the rise and decline of the Netherlands, it seems worth while to sum up and analyse the causes which have brought about the utter decline of that formerly so mighty and so prosperous State, and to consider whether that decline was necessary and unavoidable or unnecessary and avoidable.

We have seen in Chapter II. of this book that Nature had created in the Netherlands an ideal human material most apt for the foundation of a great State, and the building up of a world-empire on the broad basis of democracy. In fact the Dutch were as qualified to rule a large part of the world as were the Greeks of old. The foundation of a Dutch world-empire, as that of a Greek world-empire, had been successfully laid. At one time the Netherlands occupied on all five continents and on the sea comparatively a far greater position than that which is now occupied by Great Britain and her colonies; but gradually the Dutch, as the ancient Greeks before them, lost first their power, and then their industries, their trade, their shipping, their colonies, and their wealth. What are the causes, and which is the principal cause, of the astonishing decline of the Netherlands?

At first sight it seems that the decline of the Netherlands was unavoidable, because their cramped territory did not allow the Dutch to become a great nation; but a close investigation will show that the narrowness of the Dutch territory was only a minor and a secondary cause of that decline.

'Great States cannot be preserved by cowardice. The bravest nations are the most just in prosperity. To preserve one's own is the glory of private men. To acquire the territories of foreign nations is the glory of States.'[1] 'All free States have two principal objects, one of which is to enlarge their dominions, and the other to preserve their liberty.'[2] Providence has no favourites, and Providence has willed that greatness and prosperity among the nations should fall to the strongest and ablest. Creation is ruled by the law of the survival of the fittest. Every nation is entitled to become great and strong at the cost of weaker nations. That is the law of nature, the law of history, and the law of the Bible.[3]

The greatness of a nation depends less on its ability and on

[1] Tacitus, *Annales*, xv. [2] Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, book i. chap. xxix.
[3] See *Numbers* xii. and xiv.

the extent of its territory than on the strength of its will. Those tribes which had the will to be great have grown into nations, and those nations which had the will to be great have fought their way onward and upward, and have conquered as much territory as they needed for their development. In business and in political life those who are able, strong, and ambitious always find elbow room and come to the front. The Roman Empire, the British Empire, the Russian Empire, the German Empire, the United States—in fact, all great States—have grown from the smallest beginnings.

One example out of many will prove that the will of men, not territory and natural resources, determines the greatness of nations, and that the Dutch might have become a great nation, had they had the will to be great. In 1648, at the time when the Dutch Commonwealth was one of the greatest, and beyond doubt by far the most prosperous, among the European Great Powers, the land ruled by the Hohenzollerns consisted mainly of a straggling piece of territory east of the Elbe and of an enclave situated within the hostile kingdom of Poland. The soil of Prusso-Brandenburg was sandy and sterile, its climate forbidding, its population ignorant and poor. Ice-locked Königsberg was its only harbour; Berlin was a village of a few thousand inhabitants. The population, about one million in number, were rude peasants, a motley crowd composed of Slavs and of colonists and outlaws, from all parts of Germany, who had settled in that savage country. In 1648, Prusso-Brandenburg compared with the Netherlands as Servia or Bulgaria now compares with Great Britain. But this narrow, ill-situated, sparsely populated, poor, and backward country was ruled by Frederick William, the Great Elector, and he and his descendants, by unceasing activity, extended the frontiers of their State in every direction, introduced culture, learning, industries, art, law, and good government, and created modern Germany. In 1648, the Netherlands had three times more inhabitants than had Prusso-Brandenburg. Now Prusso-Brandenburg, having become modern Germany, has twelve times more inhabitants than the kingdom of Holland. In 1648, the Netherlands were ten times wealthier than Prusso-Brandenburg. Now modern Germany is ten times wealthier than are the Netherlands. Being originally much richer and far

more powerful, than Prussia, possessing far greater natural and artificial resources, a much larger and much abler population, and a most favourable geographical position, the Netherlands might and ought to have increased and progressed much faster than Prussia, especially as they had better opportunities for expansion than Prussia had. The Netherlands might and ought to have expanded east, west, and south, and might and ought to have become the greatest Continental and colonial Power. The New World might have become Dutch.

The history of the Netherlands is a history of missed opportunities and of opportunities deliberately thrown away. The Dutch had greatness and power, wealth and colonies, happiness and empire in their grasp; but, actuated by short-sighted selfishness, they neglected their chances. Therefore the Dutch cannot blame Nature or Fortune for the decline of their country, but only themselves. 'Had Holland been ambitious of retaining her position as a world-power, she had ample resources at her command, and she might have made an effective bid for the leadership among the representatives of Western civilisation.' [1] It cannot possibly be asserted that the physical circumstances of the country militated against the greatness of the Netherlands. The causes of their decline must be sought for elsewhere.

Not inanimate resources, but men, make a nation. In the creation of national success inanimate objects are nothing, the human factor is everything, although the handbooks of political economy unduly enlarge upon the former (commodities) and neglect the latter. The greatness and prosperity of a nation depend, not upon the size of its territory and its natural resources, and the quantity of 'commodities exchanged,' but upon its ability and upon its will, and principally upon the latter; for will can create ability, but ability cannot create will. In nations ability supplies the matter which the will directs and applies. National ability is the fuel, national will is the throbbing engine. National ability without the will to arrive at national greatness and prosperity will be wasted or misspent. Therefore a nation of able men may politically and economically be vanquished by a nation of less able men, if the will of the latter be stronger than that of the former.

[1] Cunningham, *Western Civilisation*, vol. ii. 205; see also page 139 of this work.

Without union there can be no unity of purpose. Without unity of purpose there can be no strength of national will, there can be no wise national policy, and no efficient national government and administration. Only a disciplined and united crew can hope to win in the international race for success. If the men of a nation are irreconcilably divided on the most important national questions, and constantly quarrelling, the national will cannot be strong, the national policy cannot be wise, the national administration cannot be good. Therefore unity, not uniformity, has made small States great, while disunion has dissolved the greatest empires and republics.[1]

The Dutch were disunited and quarrelled constantly among themselves. Lack of union brought about their decline, as it brought about the decline of Greece, Carthage and the great Italian republics of the Middle Ages. However, disunion is not a cause but an effect. Therefore we must examine the cause of disunion among the Dutch.

According to the greatest thinkers of antiquity, the institutions of a nation form the national character and make the people what they are.[2] Indeed, in Asia Minor, Egypt, Greece, and Italy, a change in the form of government has almost immediately led to a complete change in the character of the people. In Rome the change from an aristocratic republic to a democracy turned the most manly people the world has seen into the most unmanly and corrupt proletariat. This corrupt proletariat became again manly and cultured when governed by aristocratic republics in the Middle Ages, but once more it became unmanly and corrupt when ruled by petty tyrants in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Therefore Sismondi wisely commenced his 'History of the Italian Republics' with the words: 'One of the most important conclusions which we may draw from the study of history is this, that government has the most far-reaching influence upon the character of peoples. National virtues and vices, national energy and effeminacy, national talents, intelligence and ignorance are produced by national laws. Nature

[1] Sallust, *Jugurtha*, 10.

[2] Aristotle, *Ethics*, book x, chap. ix. and *Politics*; Plato, *de Legibus*, book lii.; Isocrates, *Areopagiticus*.

gave all to all, and government makes men what they are.'[1] The dissensions which were chronic in the Netherlands were due not so much to the peculiar character of the Dutch citizens as to the peculiar character of their government.

If we carefully study the history of the Netherlands, we find that party government—that is, government exercised by politicians who represent a party but not the nation—irreconcilably divided the Dutch, destroyed national union and the national sense, made strife permanent among them, and caused the decline of the country. It is, therefore, worth while to consider, firstly, the nature and character of party government, and then the effect of party government upon the history of the Netherlands.

If we look at popular government in the cold light of reason and experience, we find that popular government, 'government of the people, by the people, and for the people,' is a delusion. It has never existed during historical times, it exists nowhere at present, and it never will, and never can, exist. Popular government means party government. Party government means majority government. Majority government means minority government, for the majority is indifferent; it inevitably means government by a few interested and irresponsible wirepullers and agitators; it means national disunion and corruption, and administrative anarchy.

In a country ruled by party governments, there are for all practical purposes only two parties; the party in power and the party out of power. These two parties are engaged in a never-ending struggle for power. This unceasing struggle is not so much a struggle between two great national interests, or between two great national principles and ideals, as a struggle between two small sets of professional politicians, who wish to obtain place and power for themselves, and who have succeeded in persuading the people to take sides. The party struggle in a country ruled by party governments is mainly an interested struggle, and 'government of the people, by the people, and for the people,' consists mainly in this, that the nation is given the choice of giving supreme power to one out of two narrow sets of professional politicians. Beyond this very unsatisfactory option, the nation has practically no power over the government.

[1] Sismondi, *Histoire des Républiques Italiennes*, 1840, Introduction.

Party rule means majority rule. Therefore the chief aim of the two contending parties is first to obtain a majority, and then to preserve it. 'Self-interest is the mainspring of all men.'[1] Therefore party politicians have never been overscrupulous in the selection of the means for obtaining power and for preserving it.

To obtain a majority of votes, politicians have to make themselves bidders for popularity. Hence the majority of votes is apt to be given, not to the worthiest, but to the highest bidder, to the most daring, to the loudest, and to the least scrupulous. Bribery and corruption, direct or indirect, and boundless promises, to be carried out at the cost of the minority, promises which are but another form of bribery—whether the payment is to be made cash down, or at some future date, is immaterial, since the intention of influencing the will by improper means is the same in both cases—are common, and the worst are most reckless in making promises, in praising themselves, in abusing their opponents, and in flattering the masses.

'Court flatterers flourish under the tyranny of one man; demagogues under the rule of the multitude; and court flatterers and demagogues are equally solicitous to extend that unlawful domination upon which their influence depends. The demagogues persuade the multitude to disregard all established authority, and to trample under foot every law of the constitution, so that full scope may be given to the authority of occasional decrees, well knowing that, while the multitude are ruled by their passions, he who can best wield those passions must be master of the State. The multitude listen with delight to those who seem to have nothing at heart but to promote their interest, or to gratify their pleasure, and cheerfully accept their invitation of taking the public concern entirely into their own hands, so that every established authority, and every regular function of political power, is enfeebled, suspended, or utterly abolished.'[2] By continually flattering the masses, by constantly appealing to their appetite, by recklessly competing for power, and outbidding each other, party politicians habitually encourage in the people greed, laziness, self-indulgence, cowardice, and many other vices.

[1] Tacitus, *Historiæ*, i.

[2] Aristotle, *Politics*, book vi. chap. iv.

Therefore party government corrupts and debases the people, and destroys in them the sense of duty and the spirit of patriotism.

In order to preserve its majority, the ruling party must act in accordance with the wishes of the majority of voters, and allow itself to be directed by that majority, although 'you consult no very expert masters when you refer yourself to the multitude for instruction.'[1] Besides, 'it is the easiest thing in the world to raise a passion in the multitude, for no assembly exists where every man can perfectly govern himself by his own thought, sense, and reason. Nor was there ever a multitude that had the same prudence as individual men have. Whether this arises from the fact that public affairs are difficult to understand, or from the fact that men are less conscientious when they think themselves not personally responsible for the result of their actions, is immaterial. At any rate, when acting in numbers, people are apt blindly to follow the lead of others, and to neglect investigating the matter at issue with their own reason.'[2]

The average citizen can give but very little time and thought to affairs of State. Moreover, he lacks expert knowledge of political matters. Therefore he will be guided by those arguments which to him appear to be the most plausible, and the simplest, and the most elementary arguments will seem to him most convincing, and be the most effective. Consequently, in a State ruled by party politicians, an effective, and therefore popular, though mischievous and absurd, 'cry' will prove stronger than the wisest policy which requires explanation. Thus party government receives its motive force, not from the wisest, but from the least wise and most credulous, part of the community, and numbers stand for reason. *Stat pro ratione numerus.*

Self-interest being the strongest human motive, party leaders in all ages and in all countries have placed the interests of their party high above the interests of the nation. The parties in the States of ancient Greece never hesitated to conspire with Persia, Macedon, and Rome, the enemies of their country, in order to obtain supremacy; the Hannonian party in Carthage aided Rome, and brought about the fall of Carthage;[3] the parties in the Italian republics of the Middle Ages invited France and other

[1] Socrates, in Plato's *Alcibiades.*

[2] Quintilian, *Declamationes*, xi.

[3] See page 151 f.

powers to invade their country; the Dutch politicians constantly intrigued with their enemies against the Netherlands.[1] Party government means government for the benefit of the few at the cost of the many; it means government for the benefit of the ruling party, at the cost of the nation; it means, as a rule, unnational, and often anti-national, government.

Party rule means government by discussion, rule by speech. Hence, States ruled by party governments are directed, not by the ablest administrators, but by the ablest orators; 'for he who thinks aright, but cannot communicate his thoughts in a telling speech, is just as insignificant in a democracy as if he could not think at all.'[2] Able men of action are rarely great orators, and great orators are rarely able men of action. Therefore party government inevitably means government by men of inferior administrative capacity. One of the Seven Wise Men of Greece was of opinion that that State was best administered in which the laws had most, the orators least, influence.[3] Under party rule, the orators have most, the laws—and especially the laws of truth, modesty, and duty—least influence.

The foregoing should suffice to show that countries ruled by party governments are habitually ruled by men of inferior administrative capacity, who place their own interest and the interests of their party high above those of their country, who rely largely on misrepresentation and intrigue for achieving their own ends, who are guided by ignorance, who, pursuing a popular policy, deliberately act with little wisdom, who talk much and well, but do little.

Party leaders, being advanced by and dependent upon an organised party, are necessarily the servants of their party. Through their dependence they are compelled to rule chiefly for the benefit of their party. Therefore the ruling party politicians bestow offices, honours and rewards almost exclusively on party members. They are lavish in requiting services rendered to themselves and their party, while signal merit unconnected with party politics and services rendered to the nation are ignored, and therefore discouraged. The public servants are converted from national servants into party servants, for they are given

[1] See 'Party Politicians, Dutch,' in Analytical Index in this work.

[2] Thucydides, book ii. [3] Chilon, in Plutarch's *Convivium*.

the choice either to act as party tools to the harm of the nation or to resign. Grave transgressions of party members are not punished, because the exposure of their followers might lead to the exposure of the ruling party leaders, for party leaders are always to some extent at the mercy of their followers.

Party government not only debases the people, but enables, teaches and encourages one half of the population to prey upon the other half, and to oppress or plunder it. Hence, under party government, one half of the nation lives permanently under a more or less severely felt rule of repression and of injustice, or even of direct oppression and spoliation. One half of the nation looks upon the 'national' government with barely disguised hostility, if not with hatred and contempt. In such a nation, permanently divided against itself by interest, each party working solely for its own profit, 'unity,' 'nation,' 'self-sacrifice' and 'patriotism' are words of little meaning.

All governments—monarchical, oligarchical, and democratic—may, broadly speaking, be divided into two classes: governments in which the welfare of the nation is the greatest concern of the rulers, and governments in which the welfare of the nation is by no means the greatest concern of the rulers. Governments ruled by party politicians distinctly belong to the latter class.

Such are the shortcomings of party government. Party government is a very imperfect form of government. Though advantageous to the party in power, it is distinctly disadvantageous and unjust to the nation, and endangers its existence. Therefore party leaders and orators ought not to be entrusted with the conduct and supreme control of national government, especially as 'government is not merely a position of honour, but an art, and is the sublimest art.'[1] However, it must not be thought that party government is a necessary evil in a democracy. A system of government combining all the advantages of popular control, with efficient national government by experts, may well be devised. Such a system is bound to follow the crude form of popular government, so-called, which ruined the Netherlands, and which is at present in favour in all Anglo-

[1] St. Chrysostom, 2 *Cor.* vii. 13.

Saxon countries; but this history is obviously not the place for discussing at length the reform of popular government.

Now let us look at the effect of party government upon the Netherlands.

In every well-regulated commercial business, and in every properly organised household, the duties and responsibilities of all members must be clearly defined and properly distributed or confusion will rule. If a definite constitution, apportioning functions, powers and responsibilities, is absolutely indispensable in a business of moderate size, in order to prevent waste, fraud, delay, incompetence, and irresponsibility, it is infinitely more necessary in the largest, most complicated, and most important of all businesses—the national government.

Confusion and chaos were permanent in the administration of the Netherlands because no written constitution existed. A written constitution and a simple, well-arranged organisation were absolutely necessary, but the Dutch politicians objected to a definite organisation of the State for the same reason for which Oriental potentates object to a written constitution. By leaving their privileges indefinite, and constantly extending them, the Dutch politicians became autocrats, responsible only to themselves, who, though speaking in the name of the people, acted solely in their own interests and in the interests of their party, without sense of responsibility, without regard to the welfare of the nation, and without fear of punishment.

The Netherlands were a loose conglomerate of independent and practically sovereign States, which lacked a common central government. 'It is the nature of loose confederations that the need of action produces in them disorder and strife. The different aims followed by the allies draw their strength and minds in different directions, and while each of the federated States endeavours to pursue its particular interest, the common good is either disregarded or betrayed.'[1] For the preservation and the direction of the Netherlands it was absolutely necessary that the Dutch should form a nation, that the Netherlands, unified by merging all the self-governing provinces, towns and villages into a large administrative whole, and directed by a supreme national authority, should form a single State as against

[1] A. Morosini, *Historia Veneta*, 1623, book v.

the nations without. The people wished for national unity, but the politicians, who had acquired by usurpation supremacy, first in their own localities and then in the State, wanted to continue their arbitrary rule, and refused to submit to a supreme national authority, pleading that the bond of sentiment was a purer and stronger one than the bond of common interests, of common institutions, and of a national government. With the bond-of-sentiment cry the Dutch politicians deluded the populace and disguised their own selfishness.

The Netherlands required territorial expansion in order to remain a great Power as compared with the nations surrounding them, but the Dutch politicians opposed territorial expansion, because they feared that expansion might impair their absolute rule and their trading profits. By the intrigues of the party-politicians, the union of the Dutch Netherlands and the Spanish Netherlands, the present Belgium, for which the people wished, was made impossible.[1]

The Netherlands, being the wealthiest State in Europe, required a strong army for the protection of their vast wealth; but the politicians, fearing that an efficient national army might strengthen the national sense and the sense of independence of the people, and cause it to curtail the privileges of the oligarchs, deliberately destroyed their national army. Economy was the plausible 'cry' of the Dutch demagogues, which was reinforced by declamations against militarism, and by assertions that the Netherlands were a peaceful State which none would attack, that they could not be invaded, and that therefore the navy sufficed to protect the country and its world-wide trade. Hence, when the Netherlands were invaded they collapsed utterly.

The Dutch party-politicians as a class were interested in trade, not in production. Pursuing exclusively their own interests, they allowed the productive industries of the nation, and especially the fishing industry, which provided it with food and warlike men, to decay, claiming that non-interference—called in plain language neglect—was the wisest and the most scientific policy.

Through the neglect of their productive industries and lack of expansion, the Netherlands grew poorer if compared with the

[1] See 'Party-Politicians, Dutch,' in Analytical Index of this work.

nations surrounding them, they ceased to be a great State, they were no longer able to maintain an adequate navy, and they lost their possessions. The Dutch oligarchs had allowed the huge economic fabric of the Netherlands to rest precariously upon a single pillar—foreign trade. That pillar stood upon foreign soil. Dutch wealth was left unprotected at the mercy of foreign nations. Foreign nations naturally took advantage of that position. They sawed through the pillar, brought down the economic edifice, and divided among themselves the fragments of Dutch prosperity.

The Dutch merchant politicians sacrificed the national strength to cash profits. Their policy, which they justified by the popular cry of the sacredness of liberty, individualism and non-interference, was mammonism of the most selfish kind. The economists in their pay placed property above men, ignoring the fact that 'men are more important than mere property; that the statesman ought to give more attention to increasing the virtues of the former than to augmenting the mass of the latter';[1] that 'men make a State, not walls and ships by men abandoned';[2] that the most precious possession of a State is not the dead wealth possessed by a few, but the productive labour of the people.[3] Looking only after their commerce and their capital, largely invested abroad, the Dutch oligarchs callously allowed the Dutch industries, and even those industries which were the foundation of the national strength, to decay, and the Dutch working population to emigrate to foreign countries.

The Dutch party-politicians, working without restraint for their own benefit and for that of their party, divided the nation into two hostile camps, created disunion, and made it permanent in the Netherlands, promoted the disintegration of the State in order to enjoy power without responsibility, opposed its unification in order to perpetuate their supremacy; they opposed the territorial expansion of the Netherlands, opposed national organisation, opposed the creation of an efficient administration, opposed the rule of experts, neglected the army and navy, and allowed the wealth-creating resources of the country to decay. Ruling for their own benefit, and treating the Netherlands as

[1] Aristotle, *Politics*, book i. 8.
[2] Thucydides, book vii. [3] Colbert.

their farm, the Dutch party politicians exploited the nation, destroyed the power and wealth of the Netherlands, and reduced the foremost Power in Europe, and the glorious Dutch world-empire, after untold sufferings, to its present insignificance.

Experience is the mother of wisdom. History is philosophy teaching by example. The laws of history are as immutable as are the laws of Nature. The history of the rise and decline of the Netherlands teaches an invaluable lesson to all Anglo-Saxon nations, and especially to Great Britain. Great Britain and the British Empire bear a curious resemblance to the Netherlands and to the former world-empire of the Dutch. Party government has reproduced in Great Britain the same disquieting phenomena and tendencies which we have met in the Netherlands. Pursuing a purely utilitarian policy, her politicians have worked for the disintegration of the Empire, they have allowed the productive industries of the country, and even that industry which produces food and warlike men, agriculture, to decay, and the British race has undoubtedly physically deteriorated and grown unwarlike.

The strength of a country must be commensurate with its possessions, or these will fall into the hands of those nations which, by their excessive armaments, unmistakably show that they think their possessions insufficient, and that they are determined to extend them at the cost of weaker nations. The strength of Great Britain is not commensurate with her possessions, and without her possessions Great Britain will lose both her power and her wealth. The strength of the country has been neglected and largely wasted in the pursuit of a 'profitable' policy, a policy which has been profitable to the few, not to the many. 'The thing that hath been is that which shall be, and that which is done is that which shall be done, and there is no new thing under the sun.' Will Great Britain and the British Empire share the fate of the Netherlands?

'Success or failure in most undertakings has chiefly depended upon this, whether they have been executed in conformity with, or not in conformity with, the spirit of the times.'[1] The era of organised nations and of federal States has arrived. By its organisation Great Britain is not a modern State and the British Empire

[1] Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, book iii. chapter ix.

is not a modern empire. An English party government cannot possibly make Imperial politics satisfactorily.

A State must progress or it will decline. While younger nations, such as Germany and the United States—which, by the by, are highly organised federated States—are advancing with giant strides, Great Britain stands still, and appears to be rapidly sinking to the rank of a second-rate Power in strength and wealth. Will she be able to maintain with her shrinking, or at least stationary, wealth a predominant navy, and defend her colonies and possessions against all comers, although only the richest nation can create and maintain the largest and strongest fleet? Only the strength and wealth of an organically united British Empire can suffice to defend it. That organic union can be created only by a written Imperial constitution, which, while guaranteeing to each British State full liberty of action in State matters, gives equally full liberty of action to the Empire in Imperial matters.[1] The details of such a constitution cannot with advantage be discussed in this place, but it is worth mentioning that the presidency of an hereditary King—a priceless asset in a federation—gives greater promise of permanence and stability to a British federal empire than a republican federation, such as the United States of America, presided over by an elected magistrate, can possess.

It seems impossible that the British Empire, suffering from chronic misgovernment, can much longer subsist in its present unorganised and chaotic condition. Unless Great Britain and the British Colonies be soon organised and united in accordance with modern requirements, the history of the Netherlands may repeat itself, and Great Britain may lose her power, her colonies, her industries, her trade, her shipping, and her wealth to other nations. If she should share the fate of the Netherlands, the sufferings of the people would be very great, for history teaches us that the shrinkage of a nation is a terribly painful process.

[1] See pages 241-5, 401-2, and 'British Empire' in Analytical Index of this work.

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